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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to serve as a resource for adult educators who are interested in having their students assume a more active role in the process of planning, implementing (teaching/learning), and evaluating the education programs in which they are enrolled. Specifically addressed to those who work with adults on the margins of society--the poor, the incarcerated, the illiterate, the mentally handicapped and others--the guide is organized in a two-part format. The first part examines the theoretical foundations of participatory education, and the second part discusses the Abbotsfield Women's Project, which was a pilot project in participatory education that was conducted in Edmonton, Canada, between October 1985 and June 1986. The following aspects of participatory education programs are covered in part 1: the basic concept and framework of participatory education; guiding principles for participatory education (participation, commitment, community, accountability and responsibility, praxis, hope, vision, acknowledgment); curriculum and the notion of curriculum as plan (intents, sources and resources, activities, and evaluation); and administrative concerns (facility, child care, confidentiality, questions of time, staff roles, the question of power, the validity of the "numbers game," and ways of locating interested participants). Part 2 describes the history and design of the Abbotsfield Women's Project, the processes used in developing and implementing the project (creating an environment, connecting and focusing, working toward an experience of community, responding to the moment, caring for others, reaching into and beyond oneself, celebrating community, and reflecting), reactions of project participants to the project, and project outcomes. A 12-page annotated bibliogrpahy is included. (MN)

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FROM ONE EDUCATOR TO ANOTHER:

A Window on Participatory Education

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— written for adult educators willing to explore emancipatory pathways and possibilities for the adult learner

by Virginia L. Sauvé

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FOREWORD

How is it, you may ask, that the Consumer Education Project is involved with a project on Participatory Education? It is a question that we continue to ask, but with a deeper sense of understanding since we began on this journey in the spring of 1985. The journey started as most journeys do with a sense of excitement as well as some apprehension and fear. I was excited because of the challenge, and the apprehension and fear surfaced as I realized that I was part of a process that was very exploratory in nature. My work in the past had been quite cut and dried — or at least I had a sense of the outcome or final product. This experience was one of "process" — marked with the asking of very many questions. In fact, I guess, it was the "questions" that had been arising that prompted the Consumer Education Project to connect with Virginia Sauve in the first place. Questions like: "What is the relevance of consumer education to people who live in poverty?" " Do people who live in poverty have any choices or power in the marketplace?"

The understandings of our questions were deepened in conversations with Virginia, as she asked "What are the root causes of poverty?" "What is the world like for people who live in social and economic deprivation?" "What are the implications of this reality for those of us who work as adult educators?"

And so the process of exploration began, as outlined in the historical perspective starting on page 72, and we set out to work in a new way — that of engaging people in naming their learning needs and working WITH them not FOR them in the creation of a non-traditional learning experience.

The past two years have been marked with growth as we shed traditional ways of approaching a situation or educational experience with an attempt to view from a fresh perspective the challenge of working as adult educators in an emancipatory way. This guide was written in an attempt to discover and record our understandings, questions and learnings of working as adult educators in a participatory approach to education. It is a beginning and I welcome your comments, questions or the opportunity to talk with you as you begin your journey — as indeed it is an ongoing sort of thing — just when you think you arrive — you realize that the road has only just begun.

Bev Downing
Project Supervisor
Consumer Education Project

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• students and staff, especially Patsy Price, of the "SB" (Special Basic) ESL program at the Alberta Vocational Centre, where I first began to consciously develop a different approach to working with people on the margins of society.

• those inmates with whom I came in contact at the Edmonton Institution, a maximum security penitentiary, men whose life histories tell the horror of alienation present for all too many people in our society and the need to address that at the level of sources rather than surface symptoms. May they escape the devastating revolving door syndrome so very difficult to break free of once caught up therein. My special thanks to Mohammed Riad, whose faithful, wise correspondence opened up to me the world of those who know the street as their home.

• those readers who so generously gave of their time and their ideas to critique the reader's draft of this text: Michael Bopp, Elsa Auerbach, Hilary Craig, Belinda Blair, Sarah Merritt, Bev Downing, Yvonne Walmsley, Mary Selman, Jan Selman, Lorraine Flewelling, Roy Peipenberg, Glenda Everett, Patsy Price, Wendy Payne, Gail Campos, Liz Reid, Wendy McLachlin, Mary Sullivan, Debra Mudryk, Roselyn Jones and Marlene Bullock. I am especially grateful to Michael Bopp whose expertise in this area and whose generosity of spirit provided many lightposts in the rewriting. To all of you, I owe so much. It was a true privilege to see my own work through your eyes and I sincerely hope that you will find value in the changes made.

• and lastly, my four "neat" children, Monique, Ben, Madeleine and Mireille, who have patiently accepted my not-always-regular attention to the comings and goings of their lives.

This writing I offer back to all of you in thanks for your contribution to the richness of my life and in the hope that it might enable you and others to think of and act on ways of making our society a happier place for all of us.

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- written for adult educators willing to explore emancipatory pathways and possibilities for the adult learner

PART I

THEORIZING ABOUT PARTICIPATORY EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Participatory education is, simply, a learning/teaching process wherein all participants are involved in and committed to defining their own learning needs and wants, working out an approach to addressing them, and evaluating that process as they live out of and into it, all within a context of making life better for themselves and those around them.

Although the definition seems straightforward enough, the actual process may be less than easy, for it means a radical shift in the values and assumptions educators have made about their work in this society in the past one hundred years and more.

The intention of this writing is to open a window on an alternative vision of adult education for those who see flaws in the current system and have the conviction that, as educators, we have much to learn. It is not to be seen as an authoritative text with "the" answers but hopefully will present some good questions, some examples of how others have worked through some of the problems, and will serve as an invitation to dialogue both to those who are already engaged in alternative approaches to adult education and to those who would like to be.

It is especially written for those who have been or will be working with adults who find themselves on the margins of society, people who lack the tools, resources and/or desire to participate fully in mainstream society. I had been using the term disadvantaged adults but was reminded that advantage is a question of values and that maybe it is an advantage rather than a disadvantage to be afforded a perspective other than that of the mainstream. Specifically, I refer to the poor, the incarcerated, the illiterate, the person who does not speak sufficient English in English-speaking Canada, the person suffering mental illness, the person with a mental handicap, and to a large number of Canada's aboriginal people. I refer to women also, at those times when women find themselves on the margins. These persons have something in common in their shared difficulty with making their way through life in the larger society.

As educators we want to enable such learners to participate more fully in the creative, joyful development of their and our own lives. To do so, I believe we must acknowledge to ourselves and to them the meaning of their/our situatedness in relation to power. And by power, I mean knowledge, literacy, skill in using the English language purposefully, skills in achieving buying power, and possession of those other skills included in what Michael Apple (1982) has called cultural capital.

Originally, the audience I had in mind for this text was the "teacher", one who had studied teaching in a university and now finds herself or himself in a setting quite different than the one for which she or he had been educationally prepared. For the assumption in most teacher training institutions is that "education" is about teaching people to fit into a pre-existent world. Those of us who work in the margins have learned that even if through learning programs certain individuals do manage to leave one lifeworld for another deemed by society to be more desirable, there is never any shortage of people to replace them as they "move up" in the world. Participatory education goes a step beyond the "learning to fit in". In participatory education, we desire that individuals shall be co-creators of a world in transformation. This understanding demands, therefore, a shift of consciousness on the part of the trained teacher.

My choice of the teacher alone as audience for this text was questioned by some of the readers who suggested that the ideas herein are of use to other educators such as leaders of voluntary agencies and women's groups, social workers and community development personnel. Whereas I am happy to know that my experiences and my theorizing about them may indeed be of value to an audience larger than teachers per se, I would remind the reader that this is a window on participatory education and that, as such, it paints the world from the perspective of one teacher disillusioned with traditional forms of program "delivery" and in search of alternatives which emancipate rather than oppress. Every reader will bring her or his own experience to the reading of this text.

In a sense, the reader rewrites the text in the reading of it. By that I mean that what you "see" on a page depends on your experience, your values, your questions, and your attitudes. Some readers may wish to "rewrite" more literally than others; why not, if you are a volunteer, for example, write a text of your own for volunteers? You may wish to publish it, or to submit it to the college for consideration in any future editions of this writing. We would truly like this text to be seen as a beginning rather than a finished product.

The reader is urged also to see this as a workbook as well as a text. Use the spaces and margins to write your own comments and questions, doubts and inspirations. The left-hand side of each page has been left blank for your own musings. I do not see myself as an expert but as a pilgrim on a journey; you have as much to tell me as I do you. In other words, enter into the world of participatory education even as you read the chapters which follow. We are co-learners, you and I, on an endless road to discovery. Do not keep your thoughts to yourself. Share them with me and with each other. Together we can make a difference in our world. If you are willing to share your thoughts, please write to me at the community college, the address of which is at the front of this text. Be sure you put "c/o The Consumer Education Project".

A word of caution: even as this work is begun, there is an intrinsic contradiction which I accept only as a transitional necessity. If I were truly to live out of my beliefs concerning participatory education, I would not write this guide in the form or words I have chosen to do so. I would write it such that any group of learners could pick it up and use it themselves. My choosing to write this book for teachers accepts that at this moment, teachers still have the bulk of the power in determining what is learned and what is not. Unfortunately, until we as educators have succeeded somewhat more in challenging our assumptions with regard to the abilities of the learner, I doubt if there will exist many opportunities for adult learners to fully participate in their own learning ventures.

As an educator, I have had, and am still having, a struggle in letting go of certain of my own experiences as a learner, experiences which now act to prevent me from enabling people to be all they can be and act instead to create dependency situations on me, the teacher, the knower. I am a knower but so are you. So is every person who succeeds in living on this planet. So, this guide is for educators, for teachers who, like me, want to become critical thinkers capable of seeing through certain of those myths our lives have set so solidly before our eyes. Those learners with whom I have engaged in participatory forms of education have "taught" me at least as much as I have "taught" them. It will be the same for you if you allow educational programs more to emerge and less to be prescribed totally beforehand. All any guidebook can do is give you some starting points, for reflection, and for action.

There is one decision I would ask you, the reader, to consider as you begin to read what follows. If you know yourself to be a very concrete learner who learns best by starting with actualities and then moving into ideas about them, you may wish to start your reading with Part II, which describes the Abbotsfield Women's Project. In this section, you see a concrete coming together of all the ideas expressed in the first section of the text. Part I may make more sense for some of you to read after reading the example. As for myself, I only find depth and meaning in the words of Part II because I have worked my way through the ideas which gave rise to that experience. You will have to decide which is the best way for you. And so, I think, should all learners have choices which recognize their uniqueness as well as their commonalities. What do you think?

One last word about my use of the terms "educator" and "teacher". You will find both in these pages. Some of you will identify with the term "teacher" and others with the term "educator". Some of you will feel somewhat alienated by one term or the other. I feel comfortable with both but only because I see the term "teacher" in my mind's eye as a high calling, a tradition of honor. I feel sad that in recent years teaching has all too often become like the work of a technician delivering the goods. I prefer the word "educator" to "teacher" because it calls us to rethink who we are and what we are doing, but I do not want to abandon the word "teacher" because most of us have taken this on as our identity. It is my desire only that we rethink what this means, that we return to some extent to the original calling of "teacher" as one who enables another's coming to knowledge and fuller experience of being.

The text you are about to read is in its second form, the first being a draft which was sent to about thirty readers across North America. This edition owes a great deal to the experience of some of these readers and their willingness to critique carefully the draft they were sent. I would like to share briefly the gist of the responses we received.

Drafts were sent to educators I know in English as a second language (ESL), adult education, literacy and popular theatre, and, by the college, to people in consumer education and other programs within and outside the college. Respondents could be organized into three groupings. The first and largest group generally liked the text, felt it was of value to those already persuaded of a need for alternative approaches, and gave valuable suggestions for changes. They were, for the most part, grateful for the personalization of the text which touched chords of resonance within them and invited them to reflect on their own experiences.

A second, much smaller group supported and encouraged the work but demonstrated through their comments and questions that they really did not understand it; the notion of learner participation was too foreign to their experience and was therefore interpreted in a way which would make no real difference in their curriculum.

A third group of three were quite negative in their response and seemed to feel very attacked by the ideas presented. Their comments suggested the text was too emotional, too personal and made too many generalizations. My interpretation of their comments is that they did not share my value stance and said so. "Education" seems to be, for them, a very top-down affair in which learning content consists of skills and information which the teacher knows and the learners do not. For them, the language of emotion did not belong in a text of this kind. They complained about the "jargon" they found in the text. The word "jargon" I have come to see is used to refer to words which

alienate a reader or listener from the experience about which they seek to read or converse.

I am most grateful for all of the responses. Through them, I was forced to become much clearer on my values and on what I meant by my words. The negative responses helped me to see the pointlessness of trying to convert one to another's values, something several other readers suggested I should be trying to do. I state unequivocally at this point that this text disowns that intention. It is an offering intended to invite others to share their experiences, ideas and dreams and, hopefully, to trigger ideas that the readers may find of value in their own work.

The biggest learnings for me in receiving the readers' comments were the insights I received as to language. I was surprised at the numerous and varied ways in which my language was interpreted. Several readers loved the use of my children's experiences to illustrate various points. Others hated it and thought it most inappropriate. One woman said she hated those references but did not know why. Somehow, I felt positive about that response, hoping that she might ask herself why and learn from the questioning. One good friend and respected colleague said she felt if I used the word "meaningful" one more time, she would be nauseous. I wondered if I had substituted the word "useful" if it would have been equally annoying to her. Somehow, I do not think so. I had to ask myself what it meant that this word's frequency was so bothersome. (In fact, I asked her too but did not receive a reply.) I think perhaps it speaks of the same problem I felt when writing, that in trying to create new experiences, I had to choose my words very carefully and that in choosing words which were used less often than those to which we are accustomed, they became monotonous. I too found myself wishing there were more synonyms or better still, words to more finely describe shades of difference. In re-creating our society or any aspect thereof, we cannot avoid the issues of language and the ways in which it keeps us trapped. Or, we can choose to explore its roots and expand its capacity, in which case it can serve to liberate us from no longer fruitful ways of understanding our reality.

If there is any one conclusion I have reached from the dialogue which has emerged from this writing project, it is the need to remind myself that I can understand only a little of what another means, and that, in spite of nods of assent, that other probably understands only a little of what I mean when I put words together. Understanding is not a success or a failure but rather a continuum of deepening our oneness and our otherness with another through on-going dialogue and sensitivity to the other's world and to our own.

One last word concerns the way I have dealt with the problem of gender in the writing. For the most part, I have used "she or he", "her or him", putting the feminine pronoun first, which will no doubt prove the greatest distraction for those who have the least exposure to the issue and are most accustomed to the traditional use of male pronouns to refer to men or women. For me, this signifies a stand I take in social justice issues in general: all else being equal, give the one in the oppressed position the first crack! Occasionally, I have used one pronoun or the other when the going simply got too cumbersome with both. I once read a science fiction novel in which the pronouns were all "per", a usage which I initially found distracting but eventually came to really appreciate. Until our language guardians come up with an equally useful alternative, we are stuck with making the best of what we have. I do not mind. After all, it gives us an opportunity to reflect on the everyday experience of women in the world, a world that is reinforced every time someone uses traditional language.

CHAPTER 1

EXPLORING THE NOTION

In the original draft of this text, I felt a need to distinguish what I was calling "participatory education" from other terms such as "popular education", "participatory research" and community development. I had a very difficult time doing that because every time I thought I had put my finger on a definite distinction, a situation would come up in my mind to wipe it out. It was only through the frustrated patience of a few of the readers who were working in these areas that my problem became more clear for me. All of these terms have in common a desire to have people work together to make society better. All recognize inequalities in the way the larger society is now and seek more just, more joyful lives for all, especially those who suffer most in our current systems. The terms differ from one another only perhaps in the context from which they have sprung and in which they are practiced. The decision to use one term or another today seems often to be a question of politics: which term is least likely to upset those who could prevent the work of the educator from going ahead?

Perhaps by way of confession, I also felt a need to distance myself somewhat from the purely Marxist rhetoric which, in part, I do not understand, and, which I cannot totally agree with. In short, I was alienated from it. In my original attempts to distance myself, I portrayed one of the participatory approaches as more manipulative than the others. Again, my readers caught me on that and objected. At this point, rather than make judgments about which of the various approaches is better, a judgment one could only make within a context in any event, let me say only that manipulation or control is a major issue in this kind of work: when you can see issues that others have not yet defined as issues, to what degree do you ask the kinds of questions that lead people to your conclusions? Perhaps, education is intentionally manipulative and must be so. If that is the case, it is a question of degree.

Let me give a small example. A Zimbabwean colleague, whom I have mentioned further on in this chapter, told me her perceptions of life as a black child in white-controlled Rhodesia. She did not feel comfortable with her lower status in life but accepted that it must be a law of nature that white people were served by black, since that's the way it was. When the guerrillas came to her village, the people knew they had to decide one way or the other, since they would be in great danger no matter what. The guerrillas were their popular educators. They patiently asked questions which caused the people to say what their lives were like and, for the first time in many cases, to feel that it was all right to question those experiences, to wonder if perhaps inequity was not the natural order of things. It would be very easy to say that these people were manipulated into joining the guerrillas, but were they manipulated any more than any of our children are in schools where one kind of knowledge is considered valid (scientific knowledge) and another invalid (personal experience)? Is the word "manipulation" not the negative word for the similar experience of "guidance" or "leadership" which are viewed more positively? What is the difference if not that we agree with the underlying values when we say "leadership" and disagree with them when we say "manipulation"?

So, bearing in mind that this type of education carries many labels in different situations, this chapter will now seek to explore briefly the terms and the contexts which gave rise to them.

Since all pertain to adult education, that might be a good place to begin. Adult education in Canada has been of two general types, one of which I would call training, in that it delivers to learners the information and skills seen as needed for those learners to fit into an existing society: vocational programs for men and women, those adult basic education programs which are designed in a purely functional manner, continuing education classes many of which teach women to be even better at their domestic duties. The other basic type is, I feel, more deserving of the nomenclature "education" in that it enables learners to reflect on their own experience, to name it and to move beyond it. Phrases such as "Frontier College", "Antigonish", "women's collectives", "popular theatre" are all suggestive of this understanding of adult education which seeks to enable people not just to fit in but rather to participate in the on-going creation of a better society for all.

Some who resist the latter understanding of education begin their opposition with the statement that "better" could mean anything. I suppose it could and that is the point: "better" is that which a group of people has determined to be the highest "good" for them and the larger society. When that "good" is imposed by one group upon another who are forced to pay a price not exacted of those who have decided what is "good", injustice prevails for those people so subjugated. The task then, is to create ways of being together with others which enable everyone to participate in deciding upon the common good and bringing it to fruition, without distinction to race, creed, color, gender, or age. This does not mean everyone is equal but rather that each individual has an equal right to develop to the maximum within their potential and that such development inevitably serves not only the individual but also the society as a whole.

I mentioned a colleague from Zimbabwe. Actually, I have recently spoken to two such colleagues, one black and one white, both of whom have experience working as popular educators in English as a second language programs. The black woman told me of her experience of joining the Freedom Fighters when she was sixteen. One of the first things they learned from their leaders was that it was not white people who were the enemy; it was a system which white people had designed, a system which placed human beings in quite different categories according to their color. The freedom fighters were not out to destroy white people but to destroy a harmful system. I can have only admiration for such an ideal given the history of the treatment of black persons at the hands of white colonials in Africa. Today, she tells me, many of the white people who left during the revolution are returning to Zimbabwe saying, "If Ian Smith is safe and still in the government, surely we are also safe to return." That stands in some contradiction to the kind of vengeance we have seen in other historical shifts of power.

The white woman from Zimbabwe is also an educator. She shared with me her experience of going back to what had been not only her home but that of her parents and her grandparents. She considers herself an African. She was eager to share in the making of a new society, to be of assistance in a revolution she had long supported. To her dismay, she found she fit nowhere. The whites who had supported the Rhodesian government shunned her. The blacks who were busy discovering what it meant to truly participate, neither shunned her nor actively sought her skills and experience. She describes herself as the right person at the wrong time and reluctantly decided to make her home in Canada, a place where she can more easily fit in. She was the wrong color for the situation.

Both of these women's perspectives signify for me the need for people who have been oppressed to discover their own abilities, their own independence, and, for those who personally or by association have been the oppressors to understand the need to get out of the way while that happens. Eventually, we will all have to learn to work and live cooperatively, for it is one planet we share, but there is a time when too much "help" is damaging. No bird discovers it can fly by being carried, however well-meant the gesture.

The notion of participatory education is not really new although the term seems to be. As of 1985, an ERIC search I did turned up zero entries for the term. What we do find in the literature, however, are the terms "popular education" and "participatory research", both of which have much in common with participatory education. Contextually, the distinction I make for myself at this time is that, in my own efforts to do this kind of work, I have thusfar been employed by an educational institution of some kind. Admittedly, this is somewhat of a balancing act at times since such institutions exist with the permission of the status quo. However, I choose to believe that there are sufficient numbers of people within the dominant strata of the status quo who have recognized the inequities of our system and are looking for alternatives that such work can indeed take place within such institutions, although the context creates different difficulties to be worked out.

Please allow me to reiterate the definition I have given participatory education:

> **Participatory education is a learning/teaching process wherein all participants are involved in and committed to defining their own learning needs and wants, working out an approach to addressing them, and evaluating that process as they live out of and into it, all within a context of making life better for themselves and those around them.**

I doubt if popular educators would disagree greatly with this definition, although they might extend it. Popular education has historically been practiced in those countries wherein institutionalized forms of education have not been seen to meet the needs of the majority of the common people, for example, in rightist regimes of Latin America. It often appears in the form of theatre, work with photography, art, dance and puppetry, to name a few of the media, and, as discussion groups, lectures and work projects. Those who facilitate such work see one of their primary tasks as that of enabling others to become facilitators of the work. In the great literacy campaigns of Brazil, Cuba and Nicaragua, as soon as one could read and write, she or he became a teacher of those who could not, while continuing to improve her or his own literacy skills.

In popular education, there is often a more openly political agenda than that to which we are accustomed in North America. As Paulo Freire has taught us so well, all education is political in that it works either to protect the status quo or to change it. The "haves" in our society generally do not consider that their well-being is often dependent upon a lack of well-being for others. For example, if everyone were literate and could speak English or French in Canada, who would be willing to clean toilets and work in mass assembly factories for minimum wage, or less, in working conditions most of us would consider awful? To enable full access to literacy and language education programs would mean shifting our sense of worth of the jobs we now expect

immigrants or other disadvantaged adults will fill. People would have to do the jobs from some motivation other than that they are the only jobs accessible to them.

Popular education exists more from the ground up than from the top down whereas our educational institutions tend to be controlled from the top down. In all too many educational settings in which I have worked, I have been told not to ask the learners what they want to learn: "They can like it or lump it." Inmates, immigrants, mentally handicapped, aboriginal peoples, women, children and other marginalized groups do not have the rights and privileges the powerful take for granted. Participatory education, like popular education, exists primarily so that greater numbers of people can learn to access society's resources and participate in creating their own experience of life in our society.

One reader pointed out with regard to the prior paragraph that one of the major problems we face in this kind of education is that marginalized people often do not experience themselves as able to tell us what they want to learn even when they are asked. This is true, but there are certain situations wherein I have been surprised by just how articulate some people have been. I recall a prison setting in which I worked for a short time. I called a meeting and invited inmates to come and talk about what they thought education in the prison ought to be about. Approximately ten men came and made what I thought were some very reasonable suggestions, many of which would have cost no money nor created any major problems that I could see. I expressed to them my hope that some of these suggestions could be implemented. Their reaction was to smile at my naivete and warn me not to expect an enthusiastic response on the part of the powers that be. Actually they said, "Be careful, Virginia. Tomorrow, they'll lower the boom on you." To my amazement, that is exactly what happened. The administration reacted with some degree of horror at the thought that inmates should have any input whatsoever into the kind of programs which were offered. It became very clear to me at that point that the term "correctional facility" was only a euphemism and that for the most part, punishment was definitely what these places were about.

Having said, then, that some people can indeed articulate what they want to happen, the question is nonetheless valid of how do we learn to listen to those who are not so articulate? How can we become sensitive to the needs of the moment for people who have never had the opportunity to use their voice, individually or collectively?

Participatory research, or participatory action research as it is sometimes called, is a process wherein community participants research their own problematic situations with an end to improving the quality of their lives. (Popular education may also do this.) They do not work in isolation but with the help usually of facilitators who have an understanding of and compassion for members of the community and who also have informed access to the resources of the larger community. It is a powerful notion because research is a powerful instrument used to justify decision-making in society. Marginal communities and their peoples have always been objects of research, the result of which is that people other than community members then decide to "solve" the problems they have identified. It is no coincidence either, that the problem-solvers usually stand to benefit financially from their "solutions". (Look at international aid programs which are often conditionally tied to the purchase of western products and expertise.)

The way problems are defined by outsiders is very different than the way they are defined by insiders, as are the so-called solutions. Take, for example, the ever-popular subject of discussion: welfare allotments. Outsiders have been heard to say that if welfare recipients did not smoke or drink, they would have enough money and should not complain. Those who suffer any addiction know that it is not a logical decision every time one so indulges; addictions are complex responses to the whole experience of one's life. Outsiders say that there are many jobs available and the poor should not be fussy. Those who have taken jobs which paid only minimum wage and then turned out to be extremely hazardous to their health or safety have at some point made the decision not to risk their self-destruction. Outsiders may think that welfare housing is just fine and recipients should be grateful to have it. Those who live in it may wonder why there is not a playground where their children can play free of traffic, violence or cut glass; they may want proper sewers and basic maintenance which outsiders do not even realize are not there already.

Outsiders cannot possibly name the world of another who lives inside. And if they cannot name it, they certainly cannot change it for the benefit of those who do live in it. To be fully human is to participate in the decisions affecting one's own life and well-being. It is to be a Subject rather than an Object in the world.

Because most educators in adult education in Canada are "successful" products of a K-12 and university educational system, it is sometimes difficult for us to see the ways in which that very system disables those who cannot conform to its structures. We tend too easily to assume that because the system "worked" for us, it "works" for everyone. It is a system in which the curricula are largely oriented to middle-class, white, English-speaking, male values and expectations. Little priority is given, for example, to E.S.L. (English as a second language) as a subject area, and those who teach it have often reported experiencing themselves as outsiders looked down on by other staff members. Why is that?

And, when field trips are planned in public schools and notes sent home requesting money, a frequent occurrence in Edmonton now, little or no consideration is made for the single parent on a low and fixed income who cannot suddenly come up with forty-five dollars for the ski trip for one child and five dollars for the trip to the theatre for another. Such children are often "sick" that day, leaving school personnel with the impression that their parents do not care. These children are effectively excluded from many learning activities which would expand their horizons. In such ways do the barriers between children created by their differing backgrounds when they enter the school system become even more solid and enduring as they attempt to pass through that system.

Similarly, it is interesting that whereas there are now many vocational schools set up to teach those seen as incapable of handling academic work, in no school curricula of which I am aware is there an across-the-board opportunity for all students to learn a systematic approach to investment strategies. This is a skill one normally learns or does not learn from one's parents, which effectively limits the number of people who will have access to large sums of money in their lives. In none of these instances have the learners had the opportunity to say "Hey, I don't want to learn that; I want to learn this!"

Now, some readers will argue, "But it is necessary to instruct children in that way, and it does not happen with adults. There is a literal smorgasbord of continuing

education opportunities for adults. They can choose from any one of these course offerings, and if what they want is not there and there are others who want it, they can ask an institution to provide it and if there are enough people, they will." This is generally true, and it is wonderful for those who can take advantage of it. Of course, if you work shifts, you can not attend night classes. If you are unemployed or on assistance of some kind, you probably cannot afford night classes, as inexpensive as many of them are, nor are you probably aware that there are bursaries available to help you pay those expenses. If you are a single parent with small children, babysitting may be a problem. And if you dropped out of school after failing Grade 9 twice and hating every minute of school, it is unlikely you will put yourself back into a situation where you might expect to have all those negative feelings about yourself again.

But beyond all of those things, look to the actual classes themselves. What usually happens in such a course offering? Is there not a "teacher" who stands at the front and tells you what to do? In fact, do we not usually expect and want exactly that? Most of us go to these courses to learn a skill or to acquire a particular body of information and would be very upset to arrive one evening to find a facilitator who was there to help us to ask our own questions and seek out our own answers. What we effectively do as learners in these situations is give the teacher permission to direct our learning. Sometimes we are happy with that, sometimes not, but we seldom question that this is what education is nor do we as educators usually allow anyone else to question it.

If one were to return to the roots of the word "education", one would find that what we call education is actually more like training. "Education" comes from the Greek root <educere>, to lead or draw forth. "Training" comes from the root <trahere>, to pull or drag, a root which also gives us the word "tractor". It is of some concern that so many people, not distinguishing between these two notions clearly, assume that learning is learning, period. These are two very different approaches to learning. Training applies when there is a skill or body of knowledge we do not know and have decided we need to know. We go to one who does know for their help in acquiring the desired skill or knowledge. Most trainers assume that the learner has the learning skills, attitudes and values to accomplish the new learning, and, that if there are obstacles standing in the way of such learning, that is not the responsibility of the trainer, but of the learner or of some other professional designated as having the necessary skills and/or authority to help the individual overcome such obstacles. In a training mode, the focus is not on what the learner knows and is but on what the learner does not know and is not. This is a mode of teaching/learning which has served our society particularly well technologically and when applied to technical learning, all else being well, can be said to be very effective.

Problems arise when the learning is seen to be of a technical nature only but is in fact not, or, when the assumptions the trainers make about learners are not valid. Language learning and communication are good examples. Most often both of these content areas are taught in a training mode which assumes that a language is a set of parts put together to replicate some aspect of reality in order that it may be communicated to another. We speak of communication "skills" which suggests the desirability of a scientific approach to improving communication. In these understandings of both language and communication, we see a technologization of our understanding of both language and communication. Language has become a tool which is applied for a purpose. But wait, tools can be picked up and put down, and they certainly do not "work" on the user, or do they?

One of the results of the technologization of our society has been an increase in alienation, in meaninglessness. Perhaps if we can return to an understanding of languaging as an event in meaning-making, our sense of having meaning in our lives will become stronger. Language education (as opposed to language training) will provide opportunities for participants to explore meaning together, to create new meanings for themselves in community with others, focusing on structures and pieces (vocabulary) only when they get in the way of understanding. Communication will be viewed in a larger context than that of language as a tool. It will return to its original meaning of "the process of being at one together". And education will return to being a leading and a drawing forth, wherein learners are seen for what they are and know as well as what they are not and know not. In such education, learners have the opportunity to decide who they want to follow, where and how.

So, whereas many would prefer to avoid the term "education" in defining this kind of work because of all the connotations it holds for manipulation in our current context, I would prefer to use the term and remind people of its much gentler, respectful origins. Participatory education is not "doing it to people" but rather providing opportunities for people to do for themselves, especially in those situations where groups of people have previously been excluded from participating in creating the context of their own lives.

In the writing of these ideas, I at one point felt a little nervous and worried that, if funders realized how powerful this form of education can be in enabling the powerless to develop their self-confidence and their opportunities in society, they would say, "No way we want to be involved in this". I shared that doubt with a colleague who said, "In that case, good. It would be better for an institution not to be involved in this form of education if they are only masquerading. If they only want to manipulate people into thinking that they are participating, it would be far better not to use the name of participatory education at all." I thank her for that piece of wisdom and I am reminded that it is still a question for me as to what extent educational institutions can be involved in real education, in moving towards genuine equality of opportunity in our society. I would like to believe that they can and that they must.

Before moving on to other related terms, I would like to share with you the distinction made by one of the readers between participatory education and popular education. For her, there is a difference and the difference has to do with commitment. She argues that long-term commitment comes from those who actually live in a community and therefore personally suffer and/or gain from the educational work undertaken in that community. She refers to these educators as popular educators, and sees that such people are essential for lasting change to occur in a community. Participatory educators, on the other hand, she sees as persons from outside a community who are paid to come into that context to work and who return at some point to other communities to resume other aspects of their lives. I accept that the kind of commitment in these two situations is in some way different, which is not to say it cannot be intense in both situations or that both are not valid. I am not sure I would choose to label them in that way only because I know individuals of both categories, all of whom think of themselves as popular educators. What I do learn from the distinction, however, is the importance of enabling community members to themselves become popular educators.

There are some other terms which refer to work which overlaps with that of the participatory educator. One of these is community development or social animation, as it is often known internationally. This label has been used both by workers trained in that area alone and by those social workers who have realized that social assistance is a band-aid solution to the real problems of human development for those who have been excluded from the mainstream economically, culturally and politically in society. On the strength of their mandate to enable people to move out of relationships of economic dependency within the larger society, some social workers have initiated social action programs which have very similar intents to those more emancipatory forms of adult education. The difference, as I see it, is one of focus, background and context.

Community development draws heavily on a sociological analysis of social groupings and focuses on getting participants to define and solve their own problems. When community development workers are sent in from outside a community, there has been a danger of seeing their work as problem-solving. A good community development worker will, like a good adult educator, see the task more as one of problem-posing. The distinction lies in the difference between assuming the problem is known and therefore awaiting an expert solution, and, assuming that the problem has not yet been posed, in which case it is for community members to struggle to name their reality and, out of that, identify what the issues and problems might be.

Because community development has been as effective as it has in many instances, it has become a threatening idea to many government agencies who had initially failed to see the implications of enabling people to understand the nature of their own problems. Whereas community development programs in Alberta were funded generously by government agencies in the sixties, government programs are scarce and limited in their scope now. Other agencies such as the Four Worlds Development Project operating out of the University of Lethbridge are very successful in their community development work with native peoples.

In the latter sixties and throughout the seventies, the University of Alberta had a graduate program in community development. That this program is no more, speaks, I suspect, more to its success than to its failure as a catalyst to social transformation. There is still a community development route within some social work programs.

People involved in providing adult education programs are very leery of being seen as being involved in "community development" because to align themselves with that term would, in many situations, threaten their funding base. Whereas community development in Alberta has focused on social action and has recognized education and research as part of the action process, participatory education, rooted as it is in educational institutions, is focused upon learning, recognizing that research and action are inseparable from that process. It may seem like mere semantics but words have a way of focusing our attention such that we do not CHOOSE not to do certain things so much as we just do not THINK of doing them because our attention is elsewhere. Therefore, it is useful for the adult educator to consciously develop her or his awareness of those other fields which are so closely related.

All of these approaches have in common an awareness of the need to step away from the specialization which has dominated our technical way of life and step towards more wholistic forms of development.

Lastly, there is the term community education. Since this guide is being written from within the context of a community college division, whose mandate essentially is community education, it behooves us to look more closely at what the term might mean. Like its parent term, "education", it means many things to different people. At its broadest, it can refer to the location of programs, recognizing that whereas a city may be called a community, it is not experienced as one by many of the people who live within its boundaries. There are many different ways in which the bounds of a "community" may be defined. Communities can be and are being defined by geography, economic status, gender, amount and kind of formal education, degree of deviance from the legal or medical norm, ethnic or religious origin, age, or any other common feature which might bind a group of people to one another. If community education is to refer to the location of programs, such programs might then be located within any one of these "communities" of people.

Others expect more of the term community education and feel that not only should education be located WITHIN a community but should also be FOR and BY and emerge OUT OF a community of people. Such educators would also question what it is to call a group of people a community. Participatory education belongs to this latter definition of community education rather than to the first. Moving a program to a group of people might make it more convenient and therefore more accessible to some people but does not necessarily make it more relevant or valuable to those people. Even programs seen as relevant and valuable by program designers may make little difference in the lives of the learners if those very learners have not gone through the process of struggling with their own questions and working out their own understanding of what is relevant and what is not. When I hear an answer to a question I have earnestly asked, I am much more likely to "hear" that answer than if information is simply floating past my eardrums supposedly in answer to someone's assumed question. **Answers can only be answers when there is a question, an authentic, meaningful question.**

The previous pages have presented a brief introduction to a variety of terms all of which have participation and development at their core. The reader who wants to go into any one of these in greater depth is referred to the annotated bibliography where selected works of a few relevant authors are introduced.

One last note, I take from my correspondence with Michael Bopp, whose extensive and thoughtful critique of this text has made a significant and valuable difference to the final draft. He points out that popular education, participatory education, community development, and even community education all apply to the same process of involving people in the context of transforming their lives. However, all of these terms have also been co-opted as strategies of manipulation, some more subtle than others, but all of them oriented to control, to getting people to do and think what someone else wants them to do and think. There are many arguments to be made on this issue. Rather than make them here, I simply invite the reader to remember that there is an issue to consider, whether we call it leadership or manipulation.

CHAPTER 2

ACKNOWLEDGING A FRAMEWORK

Any form of conscious human endeavor takes place within a largely hidden framework of values, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes as to the nature of reality and the place of the human being with it. Education is such an endeavor, and participatory education springs from a different framework than the schooling to which most of us are accustomed.

In participatory education, reality is understood to be, to a large extent, what we make it. It is not an unyielding given to which we merely adjust and cope but is in a state of on-going transformation, in which we may take part. To change an aspect of our reality is first to question its "given-ness", to understand how it came to be and continues to come to be, and then to acknowledge that just as human beings had a hand in creating it in the first place, we as human beings are also capable of having a hand in changing it.

Although this may seem self-evident, it is a far cry from the assumptions which underlie most of our formal learning programs today. As a parent, I have often been critical of certain aspects of K-12 education which my children have found dehumanizing. As an example, children often ask, "Why do we have to learn this stuff?" That seems to me a good question for which there should be good answers. It bothers me that some teachers will answer to the effect: "Because it's good for you. Shut up and do your work." Unquestioning acceptance is an agenda which runs counter to that of enabling people to challenge aspects of our society which might be found to be "bad" or dysfunctional.

For example, I recently attended a parent-teacher interview where a teacher confided to me that he really did not know why the kids had to learn computer programming when most of them would never have occasion to need it. My daughter was failing the course because she was bored stiff and flatly refused to do the work. First of all, she did not see the relevance, although that same teacher had told the children it was very important. Secondly, she had done exactly the same exercises in two other schools in earlier grades, and thirdly, she had no respect for the teacher whom she saw as unfair and incompetent. As a parent (especially one who is also a teacher!), I have always been tempted to tell my children in such cases where I actually agreed with them, "Well, honey, I know it's a drag but the world is like that sometimes. There are things we have to do whether we like them or not." That is certainly the line most schools want parents to give. Whereas I accept this truism to a degree, I also recognize a great danger in thinking like that. Implicit to the thought is our acceptance of the world the way it is and of our own impotence to make it better, a dangerous and limiting assumption indeed.

In these examples, we see a structure of assumptions and values at work. The dominant assumption within that framework is that all is reasonably well with the world, and, if it's not, it certainly is not up to the common person to do anything about it. Teachers who operate from that inner belief system teach their students to fit in, to conform, to obey authority, not to be critical. Students are taught to accept, not to understand, in spite of curriculum guides which list critical thinking skills as one of the goals of public education.

In participatory education, the educator has a different framework, one in which people are encouraged to be critical and to expand their awareness of potential choices. When something is seen as undesirable, there are at least three choices: one can continue to ignore the problem as long as possible and hope that it will go away; one can accept the situation and try to solve problems within the rules inherent to it; or, if within those very rules can be seen the seeds of the problem, one can challenge the rules and look for creative possibilities for redesigning whatever scenario it is. **In participatory education, I do not see it as the educator's responsibility to push this choice or that but to support the learners in asking questions, gathering information, acquiring sought-after skills, clarifying issues and seeing the implications for a variety of proposed solutions to problems, and finally, to accept the learners' right to make the decisions most meaningful to them.**

(Some educators who practice participatory forms of education have argued this point with me, feeling that I am condoning the possibility of a neutral stance for the educator. That is not my intent. As a participant in the process, I too have the right to express my values and act out of them. It is too easy, though, to impose those on other participants, especially those who lack my educational background, my status in society, and my ability to articulate ideas reasonably clearly. I cannot help but have visions of what might be when I enter into an educational situation, but inherent to the very essence of participation is the risk I must take that others may not see the world as I do and may come up with quite a different response to the problems they identify, which may indeed be other than the problems I have identified. In addition, I cannot help but feel that in many cases the actual response to any given problem pales in significance to the process one undergoes to arrive at such a response.)

Nature is the critically important and oft-ignored foundation of our reality. At a time when pollution and the widespread rape, waste and misuse of natural resources are threatening life itself, we are fortunate indeed that Mother Nature works to survive whether or not we have acted responsibly. Just as cooperative endeavor amongst human beings will ease our lives, so will cooperation with nature. Participatory educators may not see issues of ecology and stewardship as issues with which learners will want to work, but environmental issues are part of the context within which we live and may very well be major issues in people's lives, whether either they or we realize it. Whereas science and technology have emerged out of and fed the western Judaeo-Christian belief that it is our role to control nature, a more wholistic view would concern us with seeking harmony with the forces of nature. Part of the framework of participatory education is, then, a healthy respect for Mother Earth and the harmony we must strive to regain with her.

The role of the human being upon this planet is seen differently by the participatory educator. Consistent with a fluid, subjective sense of reality is the view of the human being as being both valuable and capable regardless of the shape, color, gender, age and degree of wholeness that person presents to the rest of society. **Whereas most educational programs are focused on what the learner lacks, participatory education is focused upon what the learners bring to the learning context individually and in community with one another.** Whereas most educational programs are designed around a hypothetical "typical" student, participatory programs emerge around and within a group of actual individuals. Every single person who is in a group influences how that group will work together. Thus no one does not

"fit", although an individual may choose to make that decision her/himself. No one "fails" and no one is seen as a "good" student in juxtaposition to one who is supposedly "bad". Rather individuals are seen to participate as they are able at any given point in their lives.

Perhaps the most significant understanding in this type of educational enterprise is that **behavior is logical to the one demonstrating it and if others find it less than logical it is because they do not understand where that individual is coming from.** When an individual seems locked into a particular form of behavior which is seen by others as negative, it may be that the individual sees no options. Those who act violently, for example, often do so because they know, experientially, no other way. They themselves may have been repeated victims of violence and deprivation, or, they may experience their options as being so cut off that violence is the only way left. In a participatory practice of education, one does not condone anti-social behavior but rather works to provide an atmosphere in which people are not judged by the same standards as they are in the larger society and in which they have an opportunity to explore a variety of options if they so choose. I have been amazed in the various participatory settings in which I have worked at how differently individuals act towards others when they experience their own dignity and worth in the presence of others. The seemingly incapable become capable. The seemingly anti-social seem to discover that community is "kinda nice". They express feeling safer, more cared for, more supported than they had before. People who in any other circumstance would seem to have nothing in common seem to discover that they share much in their common humanity.

An attitude of hopefulness, of expectation, of positivity is also part of the framework. It is not a new idea that people learn best when they are expected to learn well. Various researchers have investigated the higher rates of failure of native children in white schools and have suggested that at least one reason these children may not be seen as having done as well as white children is that their teachers have not expected them to. Similarly, in recent years, I have seen a number of teachers target single parent children as being less capable than "normal" children. Having raised four children on my own, I see no grounds for the assumption that my children are any less capable of learning than the children of two-parent families although their situation may provide a learning context not in conformity with that expected by a rigid teacher. In doing participatory education, we demonstrate our faith that **each and every** person can learn and grow and contribute to making the world a happier, healthier place for us all.

Although programs are initiated with some type of community in mind, I have not experienced anyone being turned away for not meeting the description of that particular community. In Abbotsfield, for example, we had low-income consumers in mind when the program began. After the first few meetings, only women had come out so the group decided that, for the time being, it would be a women's group. A couple of the women do not live in the Abbotsfield area but they are welcomed nonetheless. Some women came out who did not speak English. The group made every effort to include them and to value their presence by interpreting where necessary, speaking slowly and checking to see if everyone understood. In other words, whereas our program had been a response to a perceived community, our engagement with the persons who came redefined for us the threads of that cloth we had called a community. The new cloth was richer and fuller than we had imagined, and we rose to the challenge of responding, not to what we had expected, but to what we found.

Each participant is viewed as a whole being, and the learning experience is seen as being inseparable from the lived lives of the participants. What that means is that the tasks we undertake as a group do not always take priority over the exigencies of the moment, whether they emerge in the life of a participant or from the environment itself. If someone arrives with a major problem they seem to want the group's support in addressing, it does not matter that something else was planned for the morning. Priorities change as the situation does. When a small stranger appears at the door one cold winter day hungry because her mom has no food in the house, she and her family become the priority. Many educators would scoff at such shifting of priorities saying that our job is education, not social work. Where does one draw the line? What we do for one another and for ourselves involves learning. Sharing our lives openly and trustingly with one another results in far more knowledge of what our society is like than any sociology course I have ever taken. Reaching out to help someone who needs us builds more self-esteem than an assertiveness training course could because it is real. It is life, and life is learning.

The frequent surrender of the task in favor of the urgencies of the moment can be very problematic, and I cannot say categorically either "stick with the task" or "go with the moment" . To do the former is to presume the world is known and "we" now know best how to go forward within it. It is to place our judgment over and above the lone voice that calls us from outside the task. To do the latter again and again, however, is to risk losing the momentum and vision a group has worked to build. Somehow, we must develop strength to persist when we believe the task is right and yet temper that with the compassion to respond to one whose immediate needs seem far greater to her or him than any grander design. I fail often in maintaining this balance, usually falling under the spell of repeated small waves which wash away my sand castle before it ever measures up to my dream of it. The key I find to this dilemma is that of balancing my participation with distance, being able to see from two perspectives simultaneously, the near and the far.

I am reminded, yet again, of the need for balance and harmony in all things.

CHAPTER 3

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PARTICIPATORY EDUCATION

The chapter which follows this one will present a model of curriculum which is consistent with the notions expressed thusfar. The reader will see that curriculum in this instance is not limited to the prescriptive content which we have normally come to associate with the word "curriculum". Some people have difficulty imagining what a curriculum might look like if it were not only a set of content objectives. **That which gives structure and purposeful direction to a participatory curriculum is both the curricular intents and the principles by which a group works together.** The intents are supported by these working principles.

What is a principle? A principle, for the purposes of this writing, is a position one takes because it is seen as valuable and that position provides guidelines or parameters by which one can evaluate whether one is on or off course. It is neither right nor wrong per se but is chosen because it seems to be of value in furthering one's intents. The principles discussed in this chapter do not appear together in any text with which I am familiar. Certain of them are amongst those which have indeed guided some of the courses and programs I have taken, but that is not the prime reason they appear here. They are included because in the past few years of my own work in participatory approaches to adult education these principles have emerged as powerful. By that I mean that when I act out of and into these principles, I see participants (including myself) learning, growing and becoming more fully those persons they are capable of becoming. Working within the tenets of these principles seems to coincide with energy, movement and an excitement about learning. There is an experience of being more authentically human.

In the beginning, I only vaguely hunched that we were working together in particular ways. As I became more aware of myself, I began to name and talk about the phenomena as I saw them. They become working principles, in any given context, at the point at which a group of people discuss and agree on them and can then begin to evaluate their work together against the standard of these principles. They are offered to the reader because they have had a valuable impact on my own work as an educator.

I. Participation

What does it mean, to be a participant? The term is often used to refer to anyone who attends a presentation or gathering. Does physical presence define participation?

I use the term "participate" as it is distinguished from "observe". Under what conditions is one an observer and under which a participant?

In a democratic society such as ours we pride ourselves that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate politically and economically. But do they really? In saying "everyone", we dismiss out of hand the immigrant who has not yet attained citizenship; the prisoner who has, in society's eyes, forfeited his or her rights by committing a crime; the youth; and those deemed mentally incompetent. These people cannot vote, and in cases where they can work, their wages are generally much lower than those

of the rest of society. They are fringe participants. In other words some groups of people have decided who is to be included in the "everyone" who can participate. Even in that group so included, there are ways of ensuring that it is a fairly elite group of people who can make decisions. The old adage "money speaks" has much truth as does the expression "knowledge is power". To be involved in politics in our society means one needs two things: the time to be involved (i.e., the money to have free time) and the knowledge of how the system works. Similarly, the political lobbies of note are those which represent industry, business and other large, organized groups within the electorate. The voiceless in our society generally have neither the time, the know-how nor the will to organize.

What does it mean to participate? The most usual response to an invitation of any sort to participate is often received first with disbelief (I did not hear what I thought I heard) or distrust (What do they really want of me this time?) Such persons lack confidence in their own abilities to have ideas worthy of sharing with others and in their ability to make significant changes in their lives. The educator therefore cannot assume that the mere invitation will affect participation. The invitation to participate fully is only the beginning of a long, slow journey of experiences, where, little by little, people will experience their ideas as valuable and their efforts as worthwhile.

One of the obstacles to participation in our society is the strong socialization we have had towards individualism. Indeed, as teachers, we have often viewed a good participant in a class as one who asks questions and offers comments at times considered, by us, to be appropriate. We have tended to encourage students to work hard, usually alone, and to be responsible for their own learning but no one else's. There has been little incentive to help the other, to share what one knows, in an environment where the best competitor wins the marks, the scholarships, the jobs, and the other competitors lose out on those things.

Participation begins when a group of people make the decision to come together to be part of a group. Each may have different reasons for coming, and none of those reasons may be the reasons of the facilitators who initiated the meeting in the first place. Together the group works out why they want to be together, what they want to learn and how. Together they evaluate their learning on an on-going basis and let that evaluation inform their future learning efforts. Participation means naming the world for ourselves because in the naming is the making of new worlds or the reproduction of old ones. To accept others' definitions of our world is to accept that world as it is. To work at putting our own words to the reality of our experience is to begin to have some measure of control over the nature of our reality.

Naming one's experience is one form of participation. These are strange words when we first hear them. Naming our world? — what can this mean? Well, how is "a single woman" different from "an old maid"? How is the "human potential movement" different from "California pop psychology"? How are "mandarin oranges" different from "Jap oranges" ? How is "a young man addicted to cocaine" different from "a juvenile junkie"? How is "a woman who feels unhealthily overweight" different from "a fat woman"? I think the mental shifts you just made in order to read those questions illustrate my point. Words carry whole contexts of judgment with them. If I accept someone else's negative definition of myself, how can I ever create a world in which I feel whole and able?

If, on the other hand, I can begin with events, words and situations with which I am uncomfortable and, with others, begin to discover why I am uncomfortable, then I can begin to search for the words which describe my life, not as another sees it, but as I do, and over that life, I have some power.

Another form of participation exists in the invitation to each person to act in and for the group in whatever ways she or he is able. Unlike the classroom, where the teacher directs and the students perform, participatory education programs are situations in which everyone has the opportunity to tell, ask, direct and evaluate. Everyone may not choose to exercise that opportunity in the same way, but everyone knows they will have the group's support in being and doing their best.

The facilitators, too, have much to learn about participating. We see ourselves as having perhaps different skills and information than the majority of participants but not necessarily more important or valuable skills and information. It is very easy for us to make snap decisions without consulting the group and this is to be avoided. If one of our educational intents is to enable people to be more responsible for their own lives, we must provide the maximum number of opportunities for people to exercise their responsibility. That does not happen if we facilitators make the decisions and carry them out, however small and insignificant they may seem to us. Some participants will remind the facilitators they would like a say, but others will say nothing and experience the situation as a mixed message. (They tell us we have a different role than in schools but then they make the decisions anyway.) These people are so used to being told what to do in every area of their lives that they will expect no different from us. It takes consciousness on our part, and honesty when we "goof", to allow things to be different.

II. Commitment

The word "commitment" comes to us from the Latin <com->, together, and <mit-ere>, to put. Literally, it would mean the action of putting together. The suffix <-ment> is used to refer to the product or result of the action of the verb. Here then, we have a sense of action and of putting together. The extent to which the members of any group are committed to the group, to the tasks and to the persons therein, is the extent to which the desired intents will be "put together".

There is no magic line where one can say, "Above this line, you are committed." Rather, participants in this form of education experience a call to commitment much higher than they have experienced it in more traditional settings where one's commitment is for the most part limited to a time, a place and a particular aspect of people's lives, namely "schooling".

In addition to being a valuable facet of successful participatory education programs, commitment is an issue which facilitators especially struggle with. On the one hand, you do not want to limit your relationships with participants to those of the classroom because the need and the invitation is much greater than that. On the other hand, each of us has other obligations, other commitments. Whereas most facilitators want not to draw lines before they begin to work with a group, it is necessary to know your own limits and to be willing to extend or withdraw those as you feel the need.

It can also be frightening to relate to people as real, whole human beings if we are accustomed to relating to only limited aspects of their lives. For my own part, I have discovered that inmates are as much victims as they are perpetrators; that so-called

retarded people have so very much to give and teach so-called normal people; that psychiatric patients are often products of inhuman life situations who probably need not drugs as much as genuine caring; and that refugees are some of the most courageous, resourceful people I have ever met. To have all my notions about categories of people turned upside down and rendered useless was a little frightening and disorienting. I am no longer sure who the good guys and the bad guys are, who are sick and who are healthy, who are authoritative or wise, and who are full of emptiness and false pride. Life was easier when my certainties were more fixed, but life is ever so much richer as I have come to see that it is these very certainties which so limit and handicap the lives of so many people. If enough others believe that Maggie is mentally incapable, she will believe it herself. If the whole world says Joe is a criminal, how can Joe see himself as able to be a valuable member of society?

Our commitment is not to an abstraction, an idea called participatory education. It is to real people whose self images, and therefore lives, are affected by the attitudes we manifest towards them. If we demonstrate caring, the other feels worthy of being cared for. If we listen, the other feels worth listening to. If we acknowledge, the other experiences her or his own dignity and worth. If we challenge, the other knows we hold her or him as able to overcome. If we meet her or his eyes with our eyes, she or he knows what it is to be visible, to be seen. If we let the other make mistakes and have successes, she or he knows we believe that learning is possible and can believe it herself or himself. Our commitment to these people calls for no more than what we want from others in our own lives: human dignity and the freedom to learn and do for oneself and for others.

III. Community

I began by defining community as a oneness or wholeness experienced together with others. Unlike the communities for which planners usually design programs, be those communities of geographic or other definition, community is something participatory educators recognize as that which is experienced as such. Regular educational programs seldom provide the opportunity for community to be experienced by participants because the focus is not on the participants as persons and their relationship to one another but is rather on the content and the individual's relationship to it. In the more traditional situations, a participant will be satisfied with a course if the main reason for participation is the acquisition of content. This is not always the case: people who have taught in evening continuing education programs especially will sometimes realize that the primary reason for participation is often social rather than cognitive.

I say "began" because I now realize that community must involve more than the experience of belonging together with others, as important as I feel that to be. I am grateful to Hayden Roberts (1979) for his definition of community: "a group of people who are able to be in communication with each other, who share the same interests and who have been able to formulate common objectives with a view to action." I would not substitute this for my original definition but would rather combine the two, for I am not convinced that in all that passes for communication, there is reached the experience of mutual understanding. Nonetheless, this definition is more powerful than mine in its functionality and sense of movement. A community is not just a bunch of people but rather a bunch of people going somewhere and talking about it. This is what I call a working definition in that we are given an understanding of a notion which helps us to work, to move from where we are to where we want to go.

His definition also holds an awareness of the power issue. People who have the same interests, are much more likely to be able to move together than those whose interests are disparate or even in opposition. For example, I might care very much for the plight of India's poor, but would I be willing to give up eating beef so that more people could eat grain? Would my concern for society's acceptance of those persons who have a mental handicap extend to my promoting a home-next-door on my block for those individuals? I believe that in the long term, human interests are common but most of us, myself included, have a long way to go in overcoming certain expectations as to what our daily lives are entitled to be like, expectations that are based on a social system filled with inequities and a lack of consideration of the lives of those who differ from the norm.

The functional and political awareness contained within the Roberts definition of community are important to the work of an educator or community developer. I do not want to minimize, however, the importance of working to create an atmosphere of "pulling together", of being one "family".

I believe that many people are currently aware of this need in their lives, whether or not they would be able to articulate it, and are searching for ways of addressing it. For several years, I taught conversational French at night. At the beginning, I always asked people why they were there and what they wanted from the course. There were housewives who needed an escape from the responsibilities of home and family, working people who sought a touch of the exotic to contrast with work they did not enjoy or found monotonous, people who wanted to travel and saw French as helping them to do that, and parents whose children were in the immersion programs. As a teacher, I found that people were usually most satisfied with their course when we all saw French as the **medium** of our being together rather than just the end thereof. Either way they learned, but if we were too task-oriented, it was no longer enjoyable and became yet another burden in lives already experienced as overfilled with burdens. When we had fun and laughed at our own and one another's struggles with the language, everyone could relax and put things into perspective. We became, for those evenings, a kind of community, albeit one very limited in time and commitment to one another. We did not meet Hayden Robert's definition of community, but we did contribute to that very basic human need to resonate with others like ourselves, a need I feel extends beyond the functional into the spiritual domain of our existence.

In participatory education settings, the experience of community is of major importance and is not so limited to time and place. In a community, trust builds up and, like a soft, warm blanket, protects us when we risk saying what we think and feel and asking for what we need. When people know they can be honest with each other without being rejected, that they can fail and rise to try again, they are then willing to accept the risk that meaningful learning entails.

In participatory education, facilitators can encourage participants to reflect on the following questions:

- In what way have we enhanced the experience of community for one another today?
- In what ways have we risked growing, changing and learning? When we haven't, what has prevented us from doing so? When we have, what has made that possible?
- What visions can we own in common?
- How can we work together to turn our visions into concrete experience?

In some groups, the facilitator might ask these questions as they are here written. In other groups, these words would mean nothing to the listeners. They might have no ready sense of what was meant by "experience of community" or by the word "enhance". Likewise would the expression "to risk growing, changing and learning" not make any sense.

In such situations where the way we might communicate with one another as educators is totally incomprehensible to those with less education or facility with the language, the facilitator must communicate creatively. When community exists, participants will feel free to say, "Whaterya talkin' about? That don't make no sense." As educators we have a lot to learn. Our words are of no value whatsoever if those with whom we speak do not understand them. All of us are equally responsible for making meaning together. For my own part, I could say that gestures, eyes, stories and simpler words do help the communication, but in all truth, I believe clarity of intent is of singular importance in such communicative situations.

I was once trying to explain to a beginning ESL class why it was so important that individuals accept responsibility for stopping the speaker to ask a question when they did not understand. For three weeks I had done everything I could think of from explaining to demonstrating, from pleading to badgering, to convince these people that it was in their best interests to take a more active role in controlling their own learning. One day in frustration, I stopped using easy words and speaking slowly. I abandoned my logic and waxed eloquent for about five minutes with these u[illegible]red Vietnamese fisherfolk. Even as I spoke, I realized how intently everyone was [illegible]ng. I knew they could not possibly understand what I was saying yet all were [illegible]ding in the right places. I was astounded. When I finished, the "best" student put up her hand and said, "Wait teacher. I translate." The "worst" student, who never understood anything I said and never spoke about herself except in Chinese said, "No, I understand." To my amazement, they had understood. After that, each person took increasing responsibility for her or his own learning, and I seldom had to remind people to ask questions when they did not understand.

How did that happen? I do not really know. Maybe I communicated psychically, but if so I would not know how to replicate the skill! My experience and interpretation of that incident was one wherein I cared deeply and desperately and was one hundred per cent focused on conveying what I had to say. In three weeks' time, there had built up a good feeling of trust in that classroom. The students knew I cared, and they were ready to hear, if not my words, the intent of them. I attribute that possibility to the sense of community I experienced in that situation.

IV. Accountability and Responsibility

One dictionary meaning for the word "accountability" is the ability to be called to account. This has been for me and for others the most difficult of the principles within which we work but also one of the most valuable, for when lived, it returns to an individual her sense of power over her own life.

In the past, I have equated accountability with responsibility. I now find it useful to see the two notions differently. Accountability, I see as an activity wherein an individual chooses to be in control of the events in her or his own life. I can choose to account for my own experience in life, to grow in my understandings of the sources of

that experience and to take greater charge of guiding my future experience of life. I cannot choose to account for your experience of life, for to do so would be to steal your freedom of choice.

In addition, there is such a thing as collective accountability in which a community of people chooses to deepen its understanding and take control of the collective experience of its members.

Responsibility I see as a more social activity which has to do with our ability to respond to others and to events in a caring but powerful way. Whereas I cannot ethically make your decisions for you, I can choose to be present to you in ways that empower you to exercise your freedom of choice.

To be accountable is to say, "I can come to understand why my own life is unfolding as it is and on the basis of that understanding I can choose to change certain aspects of it to my own liking." To be responsible is to say, "I am able to respond to events and persons around me in such a way that all of us can experience life more fully, more healthfully, more joyfully."

The notion of accountability may not appeal to the rational, technical mind which sees scientific evidence as the only "proof" of reality. Those who choose to be accountable are concerned with deepening our understanding of the nature of our experience of reality. Accountability is an interpretive act.

As a notion, accountability calls into question many of our beliefs about that which is real and that which is unreal. Take, for example, health. In typical western reality, sickness is believed to be due to external bacteria and viruses, a belief which to a large degree puts health outside of our control. We see ourselves as victims of a cold, victims of polio, victims of cancer. We recognize that lifestyle makes a difference to our susceptibility to illness. An accountable position would enable one to take much greater control by seeking to understand mentally, emotionally and spiritually the meaning of an illness, in the belief that the illness, in a sense, carries a message and once the message is heard, there is no longer a reason to be ill. This notion seems pretty "far out" to our usual way of seeing things, but if it enables a person to be healthy, there is certainly no harm in it, unless . . .

The danger in the notion is in the temptation for one who has learned a measure of accountability in her or his own life to use it, however well-meaningly, as a club on the head of one who is unacquainted with the notion. When I first heard of people choosing to be accountable and meeting with a degree of success, my reaction was to feel guilty and think not too highly of myself for being "unable" to do this. My self-confidence fell considerably. The notion of blame, self-blame or otherwise, is totally inconsistent with the notion of accountability and is, in addition, highly irresponsible. Accountability is choosing to try to understand. It is a difficult notion to practice but has been very helpful for me when I am so able.

As an educator, I choose to be responsible for creating a positive learning environment. I do not choose to be accountable for the learner's learning. For me to think myself accountable for either the success or failure of the learning enterprise for another is to create a dependency situation which I want to avoid. I do not want the learner to be dependent on me but to develop the skills necessary to learn independently, either with the help of good resources or in spite of poor ones.

There are, however, two good arguments to be made against this aversion to dependency. One concerns the nature of human learning. When one has a skill or body of knowledge another lacks, there is of necessity a time of dependency when the learner depends on the knower to guide her or him through a learning process. As an educator, I cannot deny the need for such dependency but do want to ensure that it is understood by the learner as a factor of learning per se rather than a description of the relationship which exists between us as two persons.

The other argument concerns interdependence as a desirable feature of human relationships. Our western emphasis on individualism has left us not as strong or free as we would have liked but all too often alienated and weakened from the stress of each one's trying to bear life's burdens alone. We need to rediscover the freedom and strength to be found in carrying our life-loads together.

In spite of these arguments, I want, as an educator, to give every opportunity for the learner to experience her or his **ability.**

Ability is a notion present in the very word "responsibility". And yet that word has lost, I think, its original sense for most of us. I grew up thinking that "responsibility" was "a drag", something I had to do because someone else thought I should and, if I didn't do it, my conscience would bother me if that someone did not. That is an oppressing understanding of the concept, an understanding which weakens us all. I am coming to see responsibility rather as a joy and privilege, for we can only truly respond, not out of duty but out of our ability, out of our gifts, our abundance, out of that which makes life worth the living. From that perspective, it is very freeing to be response-able. As I reach out to you, I am stretched; I become more than I was before. As I accept your own stretched arms to me, I know that I am not alone in my struggles to live joyfully in a world filled too often with difficulty and dis-ease. When we both exercise our ability to respond to one another, we are both winners.

In practice, this means that every encouragement is given for participants to ask their own questions when they have them, not at some convenient-to-the-presenter time. It means I am not offended but pleased when someone says, "I don't know what you're talking about. Talk plain." It means that when someone offers to teach the group something, in all likelihood the group welcomes that with eagerness regardless of whether it fits into anyone's scheduled activities or not, for we have learned that teaching is also a way of learning.

In explaining the notion of accountability to others, it is especially important that we do not offer accountability as a skill one acquires by doing A, B, and C because if the learner endeavors to do A, B, and C and then experiences failure, which is bound to happen initially with an idea so foreign to our contemporary understandings, then the spirit of learning, of trust, is damaged. Rather I choose to present the notion of accountability as a way of thinking which I have found useful. I share some stories of experiences wherein I have chosen to be accountable and have found value in my choice. I never ever say, "You should do such-and-such and all will be well." Only the person who is experiencing an event can ascertain what it might mean. Only that person can decide to act or not act on the basis of new understandings. As educators we can share our own efforts, both successes and failures, and encourage others to do those things they say they want to do in their lives. We can bring people together with the learning resources they request and we can challenge them to go beyond where they have been. But in the end, the learner is accountable.

In a participatory education setting, the principle of accountability is offered as an expression of our own faith in our ability to transform our personal and collective world. To be accountable is to ask myself, "How did I set that up to happen?" To hold another accountable is to say, "I hold you able to deal with this, to solve whatever problem, to learn whatever is to be learned, to do whatever you want to do." To be responsible is to say, "We're in this together. You are my friend and as you learn and grow, it can be good for me too. Let's do it together. How can I support you?"

V. Praxis

> *Praxis is purposeful, intentional and reflectively chosen ethical action . . . . To understand praxis requires a shift in consciousness away from dichotomizing theory and practice, toward seeing them as twin moments of the same activity that are united dialectically. Instead of leading to practice, theory becomes or is seen as the reflective moment in praxis, and articulated theory arises from that praxis to yield further praxis. (Groome 1980:152)*

Praxis is practical; it is creative; it is activity which emerges out of our deeper understandings, and it is reflection which emerges out of that which our action has revealed to us. Praxis makes a difference.

I see at least two essential features in which participatory education is made different from other educational programs because of praxis. One is the questioning; the other is the situating of reflection and action in one and the same context.

As has been expressed previously, most educational programs do not encourage critical thinking, regardless of what the curriculum may say. It is discouraged by the assumption that the teacher knows and the student does not. How can learners be critical if they see themselves as not knowing while seeing worthwhile expertise as residing in another? Because the context of participatory education is the actual lives of a specific groups of individuals, those people are, in a sense, the experts. They know their reality better than any outsider. What they may not know is how to conceptualize the nature of that lived reality, to understand how it came to be as it is, to envision it differently, and to change it. So, the task of the facilitator is, to a large degree, that of helping people to question the meaning of their own experiences in order that their lives might, with greater awareness and new possibilities, become better, easier and happier than they have been. Participatory education is fundamentally transformational.

Because the context is real lived experience, the facilitator cannot, like the traditional teacher, ignore all those aspects of someone's life which are usually seen as separate from learning. In other words, we do not just talk about possibilities. We do what we can to support one another in **doing** some of them. Sometimes we do for one another. The woman who has just learned she has a life-threatening illness is not easily able to spend a half-day listening to a lecture on where to buy fashionable clothing at bargain prices. The inmate who was told her social worker would take her out on her first day pass at 2:00 p.m. while it is now 3:30 p.m. and she is still waiting, does not want to hear that she is not paying attention to the explanations on budgeting.

In participatory education, participants pay attention to that which calls attention to itself in the daily context as well as to those plans which they have made for the longer

term. The primary focus may be on learning and on improving the quality of life, but it is recognized that we must also act in response to what the moment presents, and if that happens to be the problems of its members, so be it. This does not mean a group can solve everyone's problems. Nor does it mean that the group cannot determine a direction and follow that through to some conclusion. The group must learn to move as one in the directions they choose but must likewise continue to be sensitive to individuals, acknowledging both their pain and their joy as they are brought to the attention of the group. It is from these daily offerings that the larger picture emerges and is kept in focus. When problems seem to have common roots across our lives, roots which we can learn to see, there is a sense that maybe things can be different and it is up to us to make them so.

That which has seemed most difficult in living out of an attitude of praxis has been for most in our society the devoting of time to reflection. The work ethic of *doing*, which is held in greater esteem than *being*, makes it difficult for us to justify to ourselves and to others the need to take time to think, to journal, to question, and to discuss with others our experiences and their meaning. A working day has been seen primarily as a day of producing something, in the case of the traditional classroom, the making and carrying out of lesson plans and tests to measure their effectiveness. Sharing, questioning and talking about the meaning of teaching and learning has been seen as break time, not work time. Participatory education demands that both the whole group (including the facilitators) and the facilitators together with one another devote a significant amount of time to reflection. Some means of doing that are discussed in the activities and evaluation sections of the following chapter on curriculum.

As teachers who choose to engage in participatory education, we run the risk of being blind to our own historical baggage. Well-meaning intellectuals have throughout history committed themselves to social change but not always with success. They have sometimes become exploiters of a different kind. Freire speaks to the need to look very closely at what we do in the name of emancipatory education, and, to do what we do with humility:

> *It happens, however, that as they cease to be exploiters or indifferent spectators or simply the heirs of exploitation and move to the side of the exploited, they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think, to want, and to know. Accordingly, these adherents to the people's cause constantly run the risk of falling into a type of generosity as malefic as that of the oppressors. The generosity of the oppressors is nourished by an unjust order, which must be maintained in order to justify that generosity. Our converts, on the other hand, truly desire to transform the unjust order; but because of their background they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation. (Freire 1970:46)*

In summary, a facilitator does WITH not FOR.

Praxis moves us away from acting on the basis of superficial, naive knowledge or reality towards the possibility of action, a deeper action which is grounded in our worked-at perceptions of the sources of that reality. Whereas technique as a guiding principle leads us to ask, "How can we do this more efficiently?", praxis leads us to question the "it" itself, to ask what it is that we do, why we do it, in whose interest it is

done, in what context we act, and in what ways our doing could enable a better world. To engage in praxis is to realize that no answer is definitive, that a good question is of greater value than any single answer and that the good questions yield more meaningful responses with each renewed asking.

Praxis happens on two levels in participatory education. In that the interest of praxis is transformation to overcome the domination of one group of people by another, it is an inherently practical activity for a group of people who together question the meaning of their own experiences. The facilitators in that context enable and encourage the attitude of questioning which gives birth to deeper understandings. (For further information as to the kind of questions which need to be asked, readers are referred to *The Moment* , ed. Barndt and Czerny, described in the bibliography.)

At another level, it is important for facilitators to reflect upon their own work as educators, to be always on guard against an attitude of being more able, more knowledgeable, and more responsible than the other participants in a group. We have different skills, yes, skills which can be of value to a group of people, but we cannot rescue anyone. Meaningful change will occur for individuals and groups thereof when the awarenesses and willingness to act have grown. It is enough that as educators we cease to oppress, to deprive people of the opportunity to experience their own voice. That in itself is a major commitment. It is one which demands our attention to praxis amongst ourselves in addition to that which we practice in the larger learning groups.

VI. Hope

Why is it, I sometimes wonder, that hope is seen as a phenomenon outside of education, a phenomenon which belongs perhaps to theology or maybe psychology? I do not see the word in many educational textbooks nor do I see it in curriculum guides. Perhaps it is because hope must always be hope FOR something which indicates a dissatisfaction or anxiety with something about the present. Even if one were to hope that nothing would change, that very thought would signify a fear that it might, and is, therefore, signalling a desired change, in this case in the state of fear present to the moment. Hope is a threat to the status quo.

Another possible explanation for the absence of the word in our educational deliberations is that hope implies a vision and an envisioning whereas education has been viewed as a technical task, a task of replicating known ends, rather than creating new ones. Participatory education begins with the knowledge that life is for many people filled with frustration, despair and injustice, but it also begins with the faith that these negative conditions need not be, that with education and working together, life can be easier, better and more just for us all.

While meeting with people in Chile a few years ago, I was very impressed with how differently I experienced their poverty as opposed to poverty as I have seen it in Canada. In Canada, I have seen poverty in the inner city, the suburban housing project, rural shacks and on Indian reserves. In many of these situations, there would be expensive color T.V.'s and a variety of abandoned cars. Poverty seemed not so much an absence of material goods, although that is also a reality, as it was a poverty of hope, an acceptance that "life is the pits and you'd better take what you can get while it's there 'cause it won't be there for long". In such situations, people seem very alone. They often

have little or nothing to do with their neighbors. In Chile, the poverty I saw was not like that. In both the cities and the rural areas, poverty was definitely an absence of material necessities, but the people I met were rich in their solidarity with one another and their faith in a better future. In Canada when a family is hungry, they are usually dependent on their social worker to give them a voucher or a box from the Food Bank. In Chile, the people did for themselves and for one another.

At the soup kitchens, the men would go out in the early morning and solicit donations of vegetables from the surrounding gardens. They would climb trees in search of the small but nutritious birds' eggs. The women would combine all the offerings into the noon soup. When I looked dumbfounded at the seeming inconsistency of a woman reprimanding a shoeless, flyless, beltless boy for putting his elbows on the table, I was granted a proud lecture on their belief that their children will not always live that way and they must be prepared for that time in the future when life will be better. These people lived on hope as much as they did soup and, because of that hope, I believe them when they say that their lives will be different. It is more difficult for me to believe that the lives of the poor in Canada will soon be different because they have not yet, for the most part, discovered what it is to be in community with one another, or what it is to have hope.

So, hope is one of the principles which we cherish in our work as participatory educators. Our hope is grounded in a faith that all are able and all are of worth. There is the belief that in spite of all we do not know and of all the mistakes we are bound to make and obstacles we will come up against, that life can indeed be better for greater numbers of people.

There is risk involved in this hope, in this faith. If life is to be better for those who live on the margins, it means the social system we know and live in must also change. Life cannot be transformed for the marginalized without it also being transformed for those of us who are not in the margins. We can no longer have what we have at the cost of someone else's not having. We can no longer express our voice at the cost of silencing others. We can no longer enjoy the luxury of creativity at the cost of those who labor to produce our raw materials and tools with no time or resources to themselves enjoy creative pursuits. This is not to say that we will cease to have, to express or to create but that things will be different when greater numbers of people can enjoy those rights.

One of the greatest barriers to social transformation is our difficulty in envisioning what such a world might be like. Whereas we can learn to see how we do not want to experience our world, it is less easy to imagine how we would like our world to be.

Together with hope is the willingness to actively engage one another in envisioning the kind of world in which we would like to live. If we can imagine nothing but what we know, how can we bring about anything better? To engage in vision is to hope. To do participatory education is to assume an attitude of hope.

VII. Vision

In the original draft of this text, vision was subsumed under the principle of hope. I see clearly now the insufficiency of that decision.

Hope is an attitude of expectancy which invites vision. Vision, on the other hand, is more tangible. Vision gives concrete direction and substance to desired change. If I have been out riding my bike over a road which I discover too late to be filled with potholes and washboarding, I certainly will not make my return journey over that same road if it can be avoided. I will keep my eyes open for another route which promises to be smoother sailing, and hopefully, will afford me a vista of equal quality to the pastoral freshness through which I have just come. If I see freshly poured gravel at the beginning of one side road, I will not imagine that the rest of that road will be any safer to ride on than the part which I see. I will keep searching until that which I observe allows me to hope and expect that the new road will be safe and pleasant and will get me home.

In the above, vision is a straightforward experience. I can see my choices quite clearly. But suppose, in that instance, a big truck comes by and I am left in a cloud of dust. I cannot choose an alternate route until that dust has settled, or, I have moved away from it. **With my vision obscured, I cannot move wisely.**

In the case of creating futures, it is not so simple as riding a bicycle and waiting for the dust to settle should it arise. We have to actively create the vista which beckons us forth. **Vision describes in specific detail the possibility of a better way and shows us the path into the possibility. In showing us the path from here to there, it offers a critique of the now. It helps us to get unstuck.**

Envisioning is a collective process of imagining, evaluating and giving concrete shape to wispy fragments of dream. As children, we found it wonderfully easy to imagine all kinds of things, but we learned not to share those imaginings with most adults who all too often accused us of wasting time. We came, for the most part, to disown the value of our creative imaginations and accepted in their place that the knowledge society deemed useful and true was the knowledge worth striving for and holding on to. Later, we experienced times when that knowledge was not enough for us. It may have served us well up until then, but we were now spinning our wheels, walking in circles, looking but not finding that which had yet to be created, and it did not occur to us that we were the ones to create that which we sought. Our ability to imagine has grown rusty with disuse. As co-learners in participatory education, we must all restore our imagining abilities through waking "dreams" and descriptive tellings of them. The creation of our desired images of the future is the beginning of bringing that future into existence.

But how do we discern whether our images are true and good? Warren Ziegler (1987) offers us four criteria for such discernment:

1. True images and intentions are always specific and concrete.
2. True images do not dissolve.
3. True images are owned by the imager. (They are not a game.)
4. True images are not violent.

Do these involve value judgments? But of course! Those of us who are called educators by a community of people have a responsibility for weighing events, actual or possible, and discerning whether they are "good" or "bad" and for enabling others to do likewise. I do not want to be like the nuclear physicist who disowns responsibility for what he has created. If I create something or enable others to create, I want to be as sure as I can that that is done within a strong ethical sense of its being "good".

Ziegler himself points out that many would reject his fourth criterion but defends it saying, "Violence reduces. It diminishes. It eliminates .... It closes off options. It is a terminating activity." In other words, by the other criteria, violent images dissolve and disappear and are therefore "false to the activity of discovery." (ibid, 81)

Whether we accept or reject the criteria Ziegler offers us, it is clear that a vision is a powerful thing and we need criteria by which to evaluate the visions of our making, for though we may have to work mightily towards the realization of any vision, there exists in the clarity of a vision itself, an energy which works towards its fulfillment. To see something clearly is to know it is possible and that knowledge enables the materialization of our images.

VIII. Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement as intended herein is defined as "the recognition or confession of a person or thing to be something" (Oxford Shorter English Dictionary, two-volume). Moreover, it is an action obvious to the one so recognized. We have a richer sense of the word if we explore its origins. To recognize is to know again. Therefore to acknowledge another is to declare that you know them in a new way. It is then much more than a teacher's praise for the student who has done what he was asked to do; it is a recognition on the part of the acknowledger that, in some way, the acknowledged is a new person and cannot then be responded to in quite the same old way.

One force which acts to prevent any individual from changing is the refusal of others to look again and the consequent expectation (and therefore reproduction) of old behaviors. A classic example is the ex-convict who wants to go straight. His chances of doing that are lessened considerably if all those around him mistrust him and expect him to succumb to temptation. He can be understood for feeling angry and bitter and for doing exactly what they expect him to in spite of his intentions to the contrary, which others were not willing to acknowledge as genuine or possible.

We are social beings. Very few of us are not affected by others' opinions of us. Acknowledgement is energizing. How especially important for those who feel invisible, who feel unrecognized. When a salesclerk in a store turns around and sees five customers across the counter, she may ask who was there first. If not, she will probably respond without thought to the one she perceives to have the most authority and wait first on that person. My children are frequently upset at being ignored at sales counters. They are not preschoolers. They are visible, or should be, to the clerk, yet they are not served. Children are one of several groups in our society who tend towards a kind of invisibility in certain situations. How dehumanizing it is to go unrecognized. Children are not the only ones.

I had one memorable experience which, I am told by members of racial minorities in Canada, is a common one for them. I was travelling by bus from St. Paul to Edmonton with a black colleague. We stopped for lunch at a small restaurant in Smoky Lake. In that we had occupied the front seat of the bus, we were the first off and into the restaurant. When we entered, the waitress was wiping a counter. She appeared not to see us as we walked past her and sat down a little to the left of centre of the counter. As others entered she put aside her rag and began to take orders. She took orders from the people on both sides of us, and only after everyone else was waited on, did she take our order. Long before that moment I had shared my disbelief and growing rage with

my travelling companion who quietly advised me to remain silent. He was, he said, quite used to it, and it would accomplish nothing to get upset. I watched the waitress's face as she took our order and served us. She did not seem to be rude. I wondered if in fact she had even noticed us. Perhaps we were indeed invisible.

In that one of the definitions for "acknowledge" was to confess, I looked up "confess" in the dictionary and discovered that one meaning of the word "confess" is to declare belief in a person or thing as having a certain character or certain claims. This definition supports the understanding we have in participatory education concerning acknowledgement for it is very empowering to know that others believe in us. How can we know that someone believes in us if we are not in some way told? It may be with words, or smiles, or eye contact, a nod or a gentle touch, but acknowledgement is a powerful way of encouraging one another to be and do our best.

It is important that we do not only acknowledge results but also the effort, the willingness to try. I was fascinated a year ago with the unusual timing of one professor's acknowledgement of student participation. I have always appreciated it when a teacher has acknowledged my comments by saying "Thank you" when I finished speaking. This gentleman went one step further; he acknowledged people's willingness to speak by saying "Thank you" *before* they spoke. Odd as this seemed at the time, I was very impressed that, for him, it was not what you said that was as important as your willingness to share whatever it was. We all felt respected in that class and were perhaps more willing to risk our opinions with others as a result.

We live out of the principle of acknowledgement by listening to people, by accepting what they have to say, by encouraging their participation in discussions and their offers to help, and by seeking out their opinion. A speaker acknowledges her or his listeners by making eye contact with each person in the group rather than by directing her or his remarks to only a few. Most of all, we hold each person capable of change by not responding to each on the basis of old expectations. I am not the same person today that I was yesterday. I learned some things today; I made new decisions today. If we can somehow learn to see one another anew each time we meet, then we can see that a person is not the same, that an old behavior which used to disturb us is no longer there or that perhaps something beautiful which was there all along, we had just failed to see before.

To acknowledge another's presence, another's ability, another's value, another's action, is to lend our support to the journey that person takes, and that can only make our own journey all the better.

CHAPTER 4

CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

In the days when I believed curriculum was no more than a carefully prescribed course of studies to be followed by teacher and student alike, I had moments of conscience when during a class, something would arise which seemed by all accounts relevant and important but was not part of that particular curriculum. On the one hand I wanted to go with the flow in response to the needs the learners presented; on the other hand, I knew that to do that on a regular basis would mean we would not be doing that which had been prescribed. I sometimes went with the flow and then worried that I would be found out for transgressing the authorized bounds of my teaching.

In addition, I began reflecting on my experiences as a learner. What was it, I asked myself, that I had learned in my schooling? Well, I had learned to read and to write, exactly how, I am not sure. There are two significant items I remember, however, about the experience of learning to read. The first concerned a pre-reading book we had in Grade One. I remember, in full color, one page of this book: on it was a bookcase with several items. We were asked to look at these items, which I did, enjoying the freedom of imagining that all the toys were in fact alive, as they were in the storybook I had at home. Then we were told to turn the page and not turn back. On this new page was an empty bookcase. We were told to draw in the toys onto the shelves as they had been on the previous page. I was devastated. I could only remember the teddy bear, the drum and the doll; they were the ones which had been in my fantasy of the moment. I felt very dumb, very incapable and very afraid. I felt deceived, as if the teacher had succeeded in tricking me. Books were suddenly no longer fun.

The second event I recall was actually a regular series of events. Our Grade Two and Three teachers used to take one half hour after lunch each day to read to us from books such as the Bobbsey Twins and Anne of Green Gables. For me that was pure pleasure. I was addicted to those readings like some people are to the soap operas of today. If I was sick, I came to school anyway.

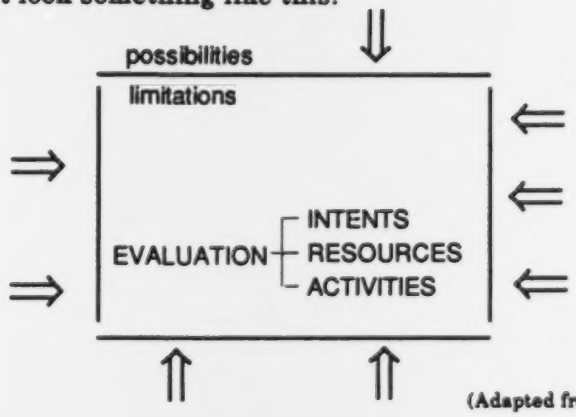
What I learned from the first experience was that teachers had the power to be what I saw as unfair, and I had no power to object. In retrospect, I can see that it would never have occurred to her that we would begin to play with the images on that page; she was quite out of touch with that aspect of a child's lifeworld. What I learned from the second was that for at least those two teachers, the reading of stories with which children can identify was a treat, not to be confused with work in the sense of most of our school *work*. I have always viewed fiction as a treat, something I allow myself when the chores are done. The hidden agenda in those years of school was at least as strong for me as the formal curriculum. I did not see the reading "treat" as part of the curriculum because the other classes were not so blessed, and as children, we all knew that curriculum was the teacher's explanation for why we had to learn "stuff" that we saw as irrelevant. At recess, those in our class would summarize the stories for others, which made us feel very important.

Thus began my questioning as to the meaning of curriculum. That which we learn seems to be much more than than which the teacher is aware of teaching. Most teachers have, in my experience, had a way of taking an enjoyable activity and turning it into work, perceived by the learners to be, by definition, less pleasant than its alternative, play. As an adult, I have had to unlearn much of what I learned as a student. Now I read for pleasure and for knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge is now something I enjoy doing, not something I do to fulfill someone else's expectations in order to escape punishment. My writing I now experience as a fulfilling creative outlet. If I choose to write for an audience, that is my choice, not someone else's. My style is mine, not a poor replica of someone else's. The question this raises for me as an educator is how we might reconceptualize the notion of curriculum so as to enable the learners to enter as happily and willingly into the more formalized learning experience as they do into the learning experiences which come with living one's life in general. It seems to me that people do not need to be pushed and prodded like unwilling beasts of burden into an experience which is rewarding and enjoyable, and I believe formal learning can be that.

One part of my answer to that question is to increase the level and kind of learner participation in the determination of the learning experience. Another is to spend considerable time with the learners of any particular group reflecting on the whole learning enterprise and each of its phases from initial conception through planning and experiencing activities. In speaking of curriculum then, I speak of it in two ways: curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experience. Curriculum-as-plan acknowledges the intentionality of the educational enterprise and its accountability beyond the individuals' needs and wants to those of the larger community. Curriculum-as-lived experience speaks to the reflective nature of the process of understanding one's total experience of learning as opposed to the fulfillment only of planned intents. Such reflection informs our ability to plan realistically. It recognizes the wholeness of the learner which encompasses much more than that learner's relationship to subject-matter or content.

Curriculum-as-plan

If one were to try to conceptualize this aspect of curriculum into a two-dimensional model, it might look something like this:



(Adapted from Werner and Aoki 1979)

The box indicates that the plan is shaped and to a degree contained by many forces acting upon it, by the possibilities present to the situation, and by the limitations

imposed by such factors as time, funds, space and skills of participants. Unlike the curriculum prescriptions of old, our "box" is not fixed. I begin with the assumption that I do not have all the information and that as I work with a group more and more information will make itself available to me which means I will have to constantly challenge the shape and size of my plan. In addition, there is an interesting interplay between the limitations and the possibilities. It is my experience that many limitations we assume in any given situation are there predominantly because we assume them and that when one sees a valid reason to challenge those, it is far less difficult than one might have assumed.

Evaluation is viewed differently than in more traditional educational models in which it occurs primarily at the end of a program and is basically a measuring of the success of the objectives enunciated before the program began. In public schools, that consists of a measuring of student achievement through tests and grading. Evaluation in our model here is intrinsic to the whole process of educating and is a qualitative, experiential-subjective and participatory process rather than a quantitative, objective, statistical process.

Each aspect of the curriculum-as-plan is discussed in greater detail as follows.

I. Intents

Intents are always formulated upon our knowledge, perceptions, questions, values, etc. as to what "is" in a given context and what "could" and "should" be in that same context. As we move further into a context and become more "of" it than "outside" it, these perceptions, knowledge, questions, etc. are bound to change. A good curriculum will grow with those changes.

I prefer to use the word "intent" rather than "goal" or "objective" because the latter seem relatively more inviolate than the first. To not accomplish a goal is to fail. To not reach an intent could mean that the intent was based on inadequate information and needs reshaping, or, that it yielded temporarily to a more urgent priority, or, that it will take more time than was originally seen as necessary. The openness of the term "intents" is more consistent with the notion of participatory education which recognizes that no one person has all the pieces, that a group of people bring together the pieces of their own unique puzzle.

Intents stand in opposition to the popular behavioral objectives of the psychologists or the competency-based learning to which so much time and money have been invested in North America in recent years. Behavioral objectives curricula are based upon the assumptions that the educator has the right and the ability to name desirable behavioral outcomes in the learning individual and to do so prior to the encounter in the classroom. In a training mode, this can be a very useful, appropriate and efficient way of designing a curriculum. If one wants to learn to type, to drive a car or to sew with patterns (in other words to learn a very specific technical skill), it is then very useful for planners to list very specifically those skills which are required to perform th esired result. The problem arises when planners fail to conceptualize the place of skills within the broader contexts of personhood and community, or, if they define as skill that which is much more than skill.

In areas of knowledge other than manual learning, these two approaches to curriculum planning are of questionable use and ethics. There are indeed thinking skills and communicative skills which could be so broken down for analysis and instruction, but values play a critical role in structuring these skills. To name them as if they were objective rather than subjective is to assume that the learner has or should have the same value stance as the teacher and the same perception and experience of reality. In participatory education, the educator cannot assume the rightness of her or his own values and the wrongness of the dominant values of a community but must work instead, with all participants, to discover what different sets of values are at play in our collective lives and how those have come to be and continue to be. It is not that we do not attach a rightness or wrongness to various sets of values but that if our experiences as educators are substantially different from those of the learners, it would be quite logical to expect different sets of values to be operating there. As we learn together with community participants, it will be our values which alter as well as theirs. Without awareness as to the ways values arise out of our experiences and then continue to affect our experience of the world, there can be few if any choices.

Likewise do competency-based curricula treat the learner as deficient raw material to be shaped according to a mould designed by those who "know" for those who "do not know". The assumption behind such treatment is that the world is an "O.K." place and that if everyone could learn to fit into it, all would be well. If you have competencies A through Z, you will fit, the theory goes, and the school's job is to ensure that you can acquire such skills so that you too can have a job and maybe a house in suburbia if you want it. There can be no room in the competency-based curriculum for genuine social analysis, critical thinking, or strategies for community social action, since these activities cannot be limited to specific skills or competencies but are rooted in values which necessitate, of their very nature, the eventual confrontation of the status quo.

In the competency-based curriculum, the student is to accept the basic structure of the "world" as the teacher presents it to her or him and to tailor her or his views and behaviors to fit that mould if she or he is to be "successful". Conflict is usually seen therein more as a negative than a positive event and is therefore discouraged; there seems to be no recognition of the possibility that conflict can also be the seed of creative opportunities if the learner can recognize that and learn to work through it as a challenge rather than see it as something to be avoided or ignored.

The intents, then, of a participatory curriculum, are very different from those of either a behavioral objectives or competency-based curricula. They are shaped at two levels, one being the facilitator's original design and the other being the on-going work of an entire group of people. The facilitator shapes initial intents consistent with her or his understanding of the meaning of adult education and within the mandate of the employing institution in those cases where there is one. The initial intents are usually very general and are regarded as a starting place for dialogue rather than as a set of absolute ends to be sought, as desirable as the intents may seem to be. The intents also reflect a particular context, and the reader is invited to refer to the chapter on Abbotsfield to see how these were written up for one specific context.

In a general fashion, the curricular principles in the previous chapter are also intents in that we intend to work towards more fully living out of them. Beyond that, a participatory education project might intend the following (this is an example, not a given):

1. That each participant shall demonstrate increased self-esteem, possibly by a willingness to more actively participate in doing the things s/he says s/he wants to do.

2. That all participants shall acquire a variety of new learning strategies to enable increased opportunities for independent and group learning.

3. That all participants shall have the opportunity to name reality in ways that make sense to each person doing the naming.

4. That all participants shall have the opportunity to communicate that awareness to others in some way. Forms of that communication might include a book of stories, puppet theatre presentations or other work of drama to be shared in the schools or community at large, or a work of art such as a quilt depicting the lived world of participants.

A reader raised here the question, "Are there non-artistic possibilities? Many people feel incompetent in this area." I am grateful for the question because it directed me to see that the practice of art is greatly devalued in our society. The artist who earns a goodly living from her or his art is rare. Whereas the upper classes are willing and able to pay high prices for "art" forms, be they live or artifactual, such forms are not available to the average working person, partly due to cost. That the practice of art is not part of all of our lives to a greater degree serves to maintain the status quo: art is creative expression and as such demands original thought, neither of which are desirable to those in power who would not have the "boat rocked". I agree that many people feel uncomfortable with artistic expression and feel at risk in being asked to undertake it. Those reservations melt quickly, however, when people see that others feel as they do and that in this setting, they will not be ridiculed or criticized for their expression but rather find appreciation for the ideas behind them and the courage involved in choosing to express them. In fact, it is often those who feel most reluctant in the beginning who get the most satisfaction out of doing it. They find it freeing.

5. That participants shall be willing to create and act upon a variety of alternatives in response to problematic situations identified by individuals and/or the group as a whole.

6. That participants shall acquire some of the skills hitherto not in their possession which will enable learners to choose to what degree they want to "buy into" mainstream society as it is, and to what degree they want to challenge those aspects of it which they have come to see as being in opposition to their own basic understandings of justice, truth, freedom and beauty. Examples follow:

a. Coping Skills and Information

e.g.
- preparing for an interview,
- job search techniques,
- renters' rights and responsibilities,
- workers' rights and responsibilities,
- resources for those on social assistance.

b. Transforming Skills and Information:

e.g.
- social analysis skills,
- organizational skills,
- community action skills,
- skills to be used in the preparation of a brief.

(The preceding list is not to be taken as a list of givens but as a list of general samples. The Abbotsfield list is more specific since it relates to a specific group of people in a context.)

7. That all participants shall experience life more joyfully and completely as a result of their experience of learning together.

8. That participants shall have the opportunity to call into question their own intents.

In deciding initial intents there are many questions to be asked. One reader cautions us to be aware of the difference between information and knowledge. In answering some of the questions which follow, for example number 4, we will get a lot of information but we cannot legitimately call that knowledge until we have woven it into a framework whereby we understand the nature of the relationships between the "pieces" of the whole. A sampling of questions follows:

1. Why is a participatory education project appropriate to this particular context?

2. a) Why is my institution or agency interested in being involved with this particular group of people in a learning enterprise?

b) Why am I/are we (i.e., the facilitators) personally interested in working in this context? What do I need and want to happen and to learn and why?

3. What do I/we have to offer these individuals as a resource to their learning?

4. Who are these people likely to be?
- previous experiences with learning
- literacy skills
- primary areas of felt need
- current degree and means of participating in society
- personal resources to bring to a group (gifts, talents, ideas, experiences, thoughts, questions, etc.,
- ages of children
- degree of financial independence
- interest in participating in such a learning enterprise
- location and access to transportation
- degree of mental, physical, emotional wholeness, as participants experience these (Beware of society's streaming according to labels. This has devalued those so labelled and serves to limit their/our human development).
- sense of self-worth, ability
- other time commitments

- values, workview, and general life experience
- degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity likely within a group.

5. What do we as facilitators believe about the nature of:
   - the human being?
   - community?
   - adult education?
   - curriculum?

And, how might the views of the community participants differ from our own? (Here we will want to remember that this is an initial inquiry before we really get to know a community and that our knowledge will increase dramatically as we do get to know them, causing us to abandon a lot of our ideas as incorrect or irrelevant.)

6. How are those beliefs likely to correspond with those of the community participants, with those of the society at large?

7. What do we as facilitators have in common with those we seek to serve? In what ways are our lives very different? Why?

8. What are the limitations of our work in this context?
   - time
   - facility
   - degree of tolerance on part of institution re: social change
   - experience, skills and flexibility of facilitators
   - funding
   - our willingness to work in difficult contexts and to have our values transformed in the process.

9. Given the limitations thus identified, what intents are reasonable?

Every educator brings to her or his work a set of values, assumptions and beliefs about the learner, the world and her/himself. It is important that each of us make these explicit because until they are, they act as unconscious shapers of our actions. The difference between the more traditional and the participatory educator is that the participatory educator recognizes that reality is subjective rather than objective and assumes, therefore, that there is much to learn from the learners. Therefore, whatever intents are structured initially are very open to change.

It is important for the educators to learn as much as they can about a community by talking with people who live there and also with others who work with them. In the course of those conversations, we need to be open to the differences in the way people see themselves as opposed to the way they are seen by teachers, social workers, principals, health care workers and others who work in the area but do not live there. Where are there differences? What is the source thereof? What might such differences mean?

When the facilitators have struggled with their questions and with their interpretations of what they have experienced in the community itself, then they are ready to write their initial intents, these to be then shared in some form in the recruitment of actual members for a group and later in more detailed form with that group. In the ideal event that the facilitators do not have to recruit participants but are invited to work in a community by members thereof, this whole process would be done by the entire group, a far preferable situation.

Michael Bopp from the Four Worlds Development Project suggests that in their experience, there is little point in working in a community until they reach out to ask for assistance, as there is inadequate commitment to change **until** that happens. He feels that if we go in and organize the articulation of such a request, we create either dependency or a "boom and bust" effect. Given my experience of Abbotsfield, I am tempted to agree, but if to agree is to say we must sit back and wait, I cannot. We can at least reach out to communities and let them know the kind of work we are willing to undertake with them. People need to know that they are not alone, that others have confidence in their ability to make changes, and that there are educators who are willing and able to help them to do that when they are ready.

The second stage of working with the intents begins when a group is together. The facilitators ask why each individual has come. These comments are recorded in some way. Then the educators share with the group their intents in being involved. The group together decides which intents to add or omit, to emphasize or de-emphasize.

As the time passes and the group works, new intents will emerge and others will seem more or less relevant than they had initially. It is important to repeatedly reflect on these intents updating them as the need is seen and evaluating one's daily efforts in accord with them. **Such reflection takes time and must be planned for.** Without it, the activities seem somehow hollow in comparison with the richness of reflected action which helps us to understand what it means to have heard or seen or said or done or made something. What it means to one individual might be very different than to others. In reflection upon such varied responses lies much of the learning.

II. Sources and Re-sources

A. The Visual World

In a school curriculum, textbooks, workbooks and hands-on "things" are the stuff of the students' learning. The teacher mediates that content to the students.

As participatory educators, we may also choose to use texts, workbooks and objects of learning, but we would probably use them in a different way, and they are not the mainstay of our learning opportunities, nor is it likely that any would be identified for definite use before a group actually began.

The primary source of content for a participatory education project is life itself as it is lived and communicated by participants. Whereas most school curricula focus on what the learner does not know, participatory education strives first for all participants to know more deeply, more consciously, more usefully, that which they already know at some level. If there are books, it is just as likely that participants will write them as it is that they shall read those written by others. In the film *Starting from Nina* produced by the Development Education Center (DEC), Toronto in 1972, an ESL teacher is shown working with a group of adult immigrant learners. They are looking at a workbook wherein there are drawings and dialogue showing a woman's daily routine. The participants are asked if their lives are like that. They say "No" and the teacher says, "Maybe we need to make a book of our own", which they then proceed to do. To have used the book as it was with no reflection as to its relevance would have been to leave the

learners with the impression that the book is how their lives should be, that there is something wrong with the way their own lives are and something good about the way lives are portrayed in the book.

(One of the readers added the following experience to the above. She remembered the Dick and Jane-type readers of youth wherein "Mum was always smiling, Dad wore a suit, everyone had food and the kids wore pyjamas (at night). **I felt I had to hide what went on in my house.**")

Such are the hidden curricula of schools whose social studies texts portray the same fight as a massacre or a victorious battle depending on who the winner was, and job preparation materials which encourage men to be "assertive" but discourage women from being "aggressive" (both words describe similar behaviors but one is viewed as positive and one as negative), and which portray men as lawyers, doctors, engineers and businessmen while women are shown as secretaries, elementary teachers, nurses and beauticians. Yes, things are changing but it is amazing how insensitive we yet are to such hidden curricula where they are yet to be found.

When commercial materials are to be used in a group, it is important that they be used in a problem-posing fashion rather than as "objective" works of fact. By this I mean that the group should try to determine the worldview and value position from which the materials came and whose interests they serve. In consumer education for example, there is a plethora of material available from producers, manufacturers and government agencies. The lovely recipe books which tell you all the tasty, inexpensive dishes which can be made from one brand of mayonnaise do not mention that with a blender or an egg beater one can make an equally tasty, many times cheaper product with no additives, using only eggs, oil, lemon juice and spices, and all in three minutes. The B.C. Fruit Growers Association gives excellent nutritious recipes for using apples. They make no mention of the possible risk of eating the numerous chemicals coating the apples we buy in the store. The Alberta government through its Better Buy Alberta campaign encourages us to buy local products but does not help us to know which of those products are healthier or less expensive than the competitive products. Materials are always produced in someone's interest. The problems arise when those interests are in conflict with the interests of the consumers of such materials. As educators, we need to be critically aware and to enable others to be likewise so that people can become informed judges of whatever advertising or literature comes their way.

B. Stories

Stories are a primary resource in participatory education. They can be oral stories or written stories. Or, they can be enacted or drawn or sung. They can be spontaneous, or they can be carefully planned from a series of photographs taken by and for participants. A story is someone's naming of their reality. Stories reveal the world of the other for the listener or reader and, in the sharing of stories, we discover the world we share. When "our" stories are different than the stories we see enacted on TV programs or in other popular media, we want to look at how they are different and why. On TV, the good guys almost always win and it's not hard to see who the good guys are and who the bad guys are. Life is not so clear. That is one reason we need to articulate our own stories, real stories; the telling of our own stories is a means of validating ourselves within our experiences.

A second reason for their importance lies in the relationship between our sense of the past and our active creation of the future. In that stories give us a means of shaping and understanding our past, they can serve as a springboard to the process of actively envisioning our future. The relationship between story and vision was more clearly understood, I believe, by past generations and other cultures than it is within our own time and culture. The Old Testament of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, for example, is filled with story-tellers and their stories. The story was the means by which the Hebrews learned and acted out of their identity as a people. Likewise it was so for the native peoples of Canada. The closest medium in our time would seem to be the themes enacted on TV and in children's comics, which are predominantly themes of power through violence, gender, and money. If we would choose an identity other than a violent one, we shall have to create for ourselves a new way of coming to know who we are as a people.

Stories bring to consciousness one's experience of life. The reader then reads those stories through the lenses of her or his own experience. In discussing the stories, there is often a validation of one's experiences, an affirmation of the teller and the teller's gifts. When a group of people discover they have similar stories of suffering, they may experience the freedom to abandon feelings of guilt, unreasonable fear or inadequacy and might be en*courage*d to re-write the scenarios of their futures and their children's futures. When the stories are different rather than similar, everyone in a community has a fuller sense of what that community is like for others. The community is strengthened for each person when everyone is more sensitive to the experiences, fears and hopes, abilities and inabilities of others within it.

There is a strong relationship between story and vision, vision being that which gives direction and energy to the intentional creation of the future. A story is the embodiment of an intentionality and it is that which gives direction to the story. When a group of people tell their story in some form, they must negotiate a unity of intention, and it is that which fosters the emergence of a collective vision towards which they may work together. Collective stories may take the form of text, film, drama, photostory or tapestry but whatever the form, the facilitating of such stories is a key strategy for educators who desire to be of assistance to developing communities.

C. Participant Concerns

As much as possible, participatory educators encourage participants to share the "stuff" of their everyday lives as resources for the group. For example, in those groups where some newspaper or papers are read regularly by at least some participants, people may choose to clip out an article they feel would be of interest. In a prison in which I worked, some inmates brought in clippings concerning poverty or justice, clippings which they felt were written from a very biased, unknowing view. They spoke of "illegal" crime (theirs) and "legal" crime (for example, the kind perpetrated upon people and the environment by rich corporations).

A participant in Abbotsfield brought in a column wherein the journalist, she felt, had a total misunderstanding of the situation about which he wrote. Having lived in the circumstances he wrote about, she had a very clear sense that he did not understand the roots of the problem at all. These contributions for group discussion provide a means whereby the whole group can learn what issues are common to everyone and begin to question the sources of the problems. That in turn, leads to the option to act or

not act, but even when the latter is chosen, that is a conscious decision and people have a sense that they are indeed choosing, for reasons they can identify. The issues and our relationship to them are somewhat demystified by the process.

Advertising is another source of interest and discussion. In Abbotsfield, we found that the women did not read the multitudinous ads which came their way. Why be tempted when we have no money to buy, they asked? Although they chose to throw away the many ads deposited in their mailboxes, they were still bombarded by advertising on the television and radio. Most groups find it fascinating to take everyday ads and begin to analyze them for the intended effects on the consumer. It is not difficult for the educator to find ads filled with bias on the basis of gender, age, appearance, race and values. Once people get involved in the process of coming to see the power of advertising they become critical consumers quite capable of judging from different perspectives than they had previously. (For the educator unaccustomed to this kind of analysis, I highly recommend the book *Getting There* by Barndt, Cristall and marino. See bibliography.)

Not every participant will feel comfortable bringing something and saying, "Look, can we talk about this?" Some people have other ways of being heard. One woman in Abbotsfield, for example, seldom speaks in the group but she participates in other ways. She had listened to a couple of the women talk about a desire to lose weight. Two weeks later, this tiny, slender woman was eating cookies. She had carefully cut the descriptive information from her cooky box and put it on the table facing the rest of us. It was her way of sharing something delicious, nutritious, sweet, low-calorie and cheap — for those who wanted to lose weight. This particular woman had never been to school and she had accepted (or been forced to accept) the decision of others that she was not capable of learning formally. For weeks she said nothing to anyone in the group except on the telephone. Now she speaks to several of us before, after, and sometimes during the group. Before, she was occasionally accused of shoplifting because she did not make eye contact with people. Now she looks at the person who is speaking and turns away less frequently than before when she is being spoken to. She has applied for and been accepted in a special literacy program to begin in the fall. She is a good example of a person who, given the support and respect she deserves, has become more able than those around her had thought possible.

D. Posters

Posters are used as a resource from time to time, some of them commercial and some made by us. Some are posted quietly and attended to only if someone notices something and brings it to the group's attention as was the case the morning a "quilt" poster was hung. This poster depicts a quilt made of squares which bear symbols of feminism and of the peace movement. The women were excited to notice many significant details in the poster, details they happily pointed out to us.

Another poster which we hang each time we meet is one which lists colorfully the principles explained in the third chapter of this writing. It serves as a reminder to us all and a means of focusing our attention and direction when someone notices we are not acting out of what we say we believe in. Initially, the facilitators take responsibility for using the poster in this way but it is not long before others take responsibility for it too.

This poster is a tool which helps us to attend to the process of our working and learning together.

One reader encouraged us to work on our visuals in that they can be important "noetic integrators" (C.J. Jung's term, he tells us) which help readers to hold many complex dynamics which are interrelated in one single focus. I agree that this particular visual could be much stronger. What it cannot show, in a black and white text format, is the use of color as it exists in practice. We used red where strength and action seemed part of a notion, blue where spirituality and reflection were emphasized. These were very elementary awarenesses on our part that color speaks a language of its own and operates at the subconscious level. (Educators using the Anisa methodology such as the Kipotakaw teachers, in an Alberta native community, make use of a very complex understanding of the power of color to influence human behavior.) I do agree with the reader's statement that we need to work on our visuals, not just in this text, but in our work as educators. I am confident that we need strong images which we can use to keep ourselves focused upon our tasks and our abilities to undertake and succeed in them.

Another such tool is the posted journal. At the end of each meeting we write up, on large white sheets of paper, a summary of what we have done that day. Noteworthy discussions, events, commitments and decisions are noted therein. After some weeks, it has become a way of looking back on who we are, where we have been and where we are going. As time has passed we have become aware at Abbotsfield of the need to transcribe these journal sheets onto paper and give them back to people so that everyone can together see more clearly where we have been, where we have decided to head, and what has prevented us from doing so. In a recent workshop done by Barb Thomas, a facilitator from Toronto, I saw the wisdom in her commitment to return to the participants in the group the proceedings of the day in some format. It acknowledges that our day to day activities in groupwork are a form of knowledge which we have created and for which we need to take credit. The retelling of these activities provides an artifact of our creation.

Other posters we make during sessions together. They may be drawings of our lives or collective accountings of someone's strengths. They are simply a way of giving

visible, tangible shape to the substance of our collective learning as are the frequent photos we take to provide a record of our work and which, at times, become the basis for telling our stories.

E. The Unexpected

Resources need not be material. They may be the situations and events of our lives and of our time together. One day we were interrupted by a small child at the door. This tiny girl of no more than three years wanted to come in to play. It was cold outside. We saw no sign of Mommy. She looked very much like an older child who had come to the door hungry one previous morning. I decided to accompany her to her home to see if it would be all right for her to come in and play. At her home was an old grandmother who spoke Slavee rather than English but who communicated in sign language that she had no money and wanted to go home to the north but had to look after her daughter's children. The family had no furniture or toys in sight except for a small TV set on a cinder block.

This small "interruption" in our group's program accomplished two important things. One, it added rich new insights as to the nature of the context in which people lived. Secondly, it provided an opportunity for the group to carry on without me who up to that point seemed usually to be looked to as the "expert". When my skills were not there, the group was obliged to find and use the skills of others. Third, and more important than it may seem, the College sign on the window will now be more than a sign to at least one family who knows that behind the sign, there are real people who care about children. Too many people who live in poverty have had alienating experiences with educational institutions. Small events such as this provide the opportunity to begin to reweave a tapestry of trust.

F. Visitors

People outside the group are also resources to it for a variety of good reasons. The experience of knowing only disadvantage, of being on the outside of the mainstream of our society, is at least in part maintained by the culture of silence within that experience. Silence can mean many things. It can mean an acceptance of the status quo and one's unfortunate lot within it. It can result from a notable inadequacy with language, verbal as well as written. It could also not be silence at all but an unwillingness of the dominant majority to hear what is being said, therefore leaving a perception of silence where it does not exist.

Language is a kind of currency in our society. The way one communicates can be the currency which buys one into desirable employment and social status. If one has daily contact with only the language of one's own people and background, or with the bureaucracy seen as being both outside of and yet in control of oneself, one is not inclined to acquire the language currency which would enable one to bridge the large gaps. Such people who are isolated from the mainstream, for whatever reasons, need to find themselves in communicative situations where there is an opportunity for genuine human dialogue with those who are not in the same circumstances.

In participatory education, a group might choose to have a guest speaker in, but the major usefulness of having such a guest would be in the opportunity not just to receive information but to converse in a very straightforward heart-to-heart fashion. In many

instances where a guest has come into such a context with the intent only to impart information, that person has left looking frustrated, no doubt unable to grasp the meaning of the frequent interruptions to her or his "lecture". The "listeners" did not want to have more one-way information dumped on them. In some cases they wanted only to be heard; in others, they wanted honest dialogue. It is my belief that the beginning of dialogue is the willingness and the ability of two parties to listen and to hear one another, to look beyond the words and silences to the meaning thereof, and to care. When these conditions exist, it is possible for language to be the medium of transcending the limitations of one's individual experience, to "taste" the world of another and know to what degree it is shared or not.

At Abbotsfield, we have had visitors from the community, from agencies such as the Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board and from other parts of the college. The most popular visitor was a woman who had herself been on welfare for several years and is now a full-time university student and house owner. She told us how she survived the lean years and overcame the numerous obstacles there were to getting beyond them. She was a fount of both information and inspiration. She listened to the stories of the other women, identified with them and encouraged the women to take charge of their lives to a greater degree.

Another session was led by one of the members of the group who had herself done tax clinics in the past. We encourage all participants in a group to name and share their talents with the group as a whole.

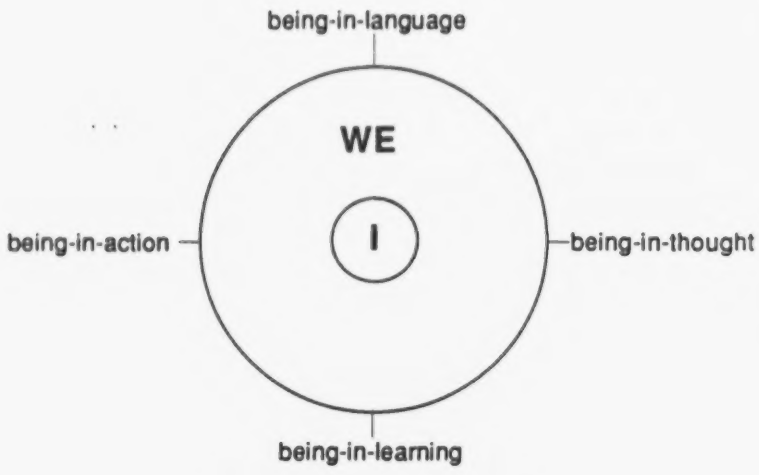
A resource is any person, thing, or event which helps us to move towards our intents.

III. Activities

Introduction

The activities engaged in within the aegis of participatory education are those which enable us to be reflective, interpretive, action-oriented, emancipatory, mindful of our situatedness in a particular context and of our groundedness in a worldview, and oriented to persons in their wholeness. These stand in contrast to the activities of a delivery-based system of schooling which is production-centered, "objective", prescriptive, protective of the status quo and oriented to content. In both, learners might have the opportunity to listen to a guest speaker but whereas in the delivery orientation, students would listen for information, in a participatory approach to learning, the listeners would be also concerned with the context of the information and the interests represented by the speaker in sharing it, and would themselves have determined to invite the speaker. So, whereas some of the activities may appear to the casual observer to be similar, the context and meaning of them are different.

BEING AND DOING



The label of "activities" is a little misleading in that it neglects the beingness of our lived world but does reflect well the orientation of our society towards doing. "Act" and "action" are from the Latin <actum>, a thing done, which is in turn derived from <agere>, drive or do. In our society there is a tremendous value placed upon the doing of something. We may indeed be driven to the point of feeling guilty if we cannot readily tell someone what it is that we are doing. Yet education is, in the classic sense, more concerned with being than doing. It is intended to enable the individual to be the very best she or he can be to the mutual benefit of the individual and of the whole society. Thus our "activities" in participatory education are concerned with and emerge out of the beingness of persons.

The circle above attempts to offer a way of seeing our activities as happening within the realm of being in language, in thought, in learning and in action. These are somewhat arbitrary, overlapping categories since each is present in the other three. They are offered merely as an heuristic for conceptualizing certain of the kinds of activities typically found in such learning contexts. They are not mutually exclusive of each other but can be useful each as a point of emphasis.

A. Being-in-language

As individuals, we experience our lives in relation to others. We are not alone; we are social beings. Language is the medium in which we experience ourselves and others in our common environments. As was mentioned earlier, one's facility and comfort in language have a lot to do with one's experience of life. We spend a lot of time communicating with one another in participatory education.

This is perhaps the area where I see the greatest difference between learning with "advantaged" people and learning with relatively more "disadvantaged" people. Those who have learned how to learn and who know what it is to be deemed successful can learn comfortably in traditional teacher-controlled situations. They can leave them with the information and skills for which they came.

This directive approach, however, for an educator in a low-income housing project, some native communities, some women's groups or a prison is likely doomed to frustrate everyone. My experience has been that there is boredom or frustration in such a setting for the simple reason, I believe, that these people have an overload of being talked to and at and an almost desperate need to speak and be listened to and heard. When my colleague and I first began at Abbotsfield, we were both somewhat exhausted by the flood of stories which poured forth like a torrent into any possible opening in the communicative fabric. We had to ask ourselves carefully, "What is the point of all these stories?" and, "What is our role as educators in relation to them?"

The answer I have chosen to guide my work is one which involves listening but then going beyond the listening to encourage everyone to better understand the meaning of the words, the commonalities between people's stories, and from that, to begin to get a verbal picture of the community story. Thus bearing this perspective of connectedness, a group of people can then begin to use their collective story as the basis from which to begin to envision a reality of their own creation. It is an art, I have found, to get an individual or group to move beyond their stories. Many of them want to stop with the therapeutic venting of their anger, hurts, frustrations, and triumphs. As an educator, I must see that as only a beginning. The stories are often stories of victimization. Since accountability is one of the principles in which we work, we want people to learn that they need not take a victim position but can choose to be both responsible and accountable for their experiences of life.

As an educator, I listen to a story, support the teller's telling of it, and then may choose to ask questions intended to assist the teller and other listeners to expand their perceptions of the significance of the story, and to imagine other outcomes which may have been possible given different understandings. I ask "why?" a lot and "what do you suppose . . .?" I encourage people to see the world less as being either like this or like that only, and more as like so, or so, or so . . . ?, to see that the reality we think we know is only one way of looking at it. I want people to know they have many more choices than they ever see at any given point and it is a matter of believing, perhaps on faith, that they exist and then setting out to discover what those choices are.

Have you ever had an experience so unique you could not wait to tell someone about it and were then disappointed to find that in the telling, the experience lost something, that it fell flat? You then said, "Oh, I just can't explain it." Our putting to words of our experiences is more than just a labelling; it is a process wherein we further give shape to our experiences as we try to fit them into the language forms available to us. For those on the suffering end of the status quo, it is even more difficult for them to find language to relate their experiences of being on the outside because generally they are blamed for that state of affairs. Therefore the stories they tell of their experiences are inclined to be stories of frustration, stories in need of a fuller telling, a telling which sees the roots of situations, not just the surface thereof. Using language to describe our lived worlds is a way of sharing, making, and validating the meanings we hold. To change our lives, we need also to change our meanings. Languaging (being in language) is therefore a very essential aspect of education as a transformative activity.

To be more explicit as to what is meant by story-telling as an activity, there are various ways in which that happens. Seldom is it a situation where someone says, "Let's tell our stories." I have found many people to be relatively speechless at being asked to think of a story. The stories emerge as people try to connect with what someone

else is saying. As an educator, I look for common threads, themes, which tie stories together, not only in one session, but over time. A frequent theme which emerges, for example, is powerlessness and the consequent anger that produces. I have heard that theme in the stories of inmates, poor people, sick or handicapped people, women and children. They are stories of coming up against systems and losing. The systems may be legal, medical or concerned with social assistance but have the common feature of being faceless bureaucracies. No one in them accepts blame or responsibility for the systems' failures to serve the needs of the people they were supposedly created to serve. Delivery agents of the system always point the finger of blame past themselves. I believe the reason for the popularity at Abbotsfield of the woman guest who had been on welfare for years was that she was able to show us her path around and through the wall of this faceless bureaucracy. She did not take no for an answer when she felt the answer was wrong. She did her homework well and her efforts were rewarded eventually with a home of her own and a subsidized program of higher education. Her stories provided hope for others who had felt hopeless.

Although story-telling accounts for a lot of time in participatory education settings, it cannot be allowed to dominate totally the group's time together, for the stories lose most of their value if they are no more than stories. When common threads are found, understanding is sought; problems and learning needs are identified as are the skills and information necessary to respond to those learning needs. Out of that process come plans, discussions and other activities.

One reader asked the question "Who does the allowing or disallowing? Won't the stories continue to dominate until there isn't the same need for them?" In response, I would say that the need will not change **until** the story-tellers find ways to move beyond their stories. It is not a matter of "spilling one's guts and getting on with it" because the context which gave rise to those stories will continue to do so until the context itself has changed. Initially, I believe, the facilitators have to initiate the awareness that the stories alone are not enough and must be followed by questions as to their overall meaning within the shared social context of the community. The bottom line seems to be that if people are not willing to move beyond the stories, they are not sufficiently committed as yet to changing their reality. The "allowing" or "disallowing" itself, however, must come from the group as a whole. As a facilitator, I remind people of the implications of our choices, as I see them, and encourage others to do likewise.

B. Being-in-thought: Reflection and Critical Thinking

Our individual and collective lives emerge for another's viewing and for our own as we share our stories. Our words weave a fabric hitherto less visible to our inspection (and retrospection). Any group of people can sit around and share stories. It becomes part of an educational enterprise when someone, in this case the educator, takes responsibility for urging people to move beyond their stories to the meanings inherent to them and from that, to be moved to act in ways which enhance the possibility of future stories being happier, more fulfilled ones.

One tool by which we can engage learners in critical thinking is a questioning tool called problem-posing. I refer to Nina Wallerstein's definition thereof:

> *Problem-posing . . . begins by listening for students' issues. Based on the listening, teachers then select and present familiar situations back to the students in a codified form: a photograph, a written dialogue, a story or a drawing.*

Each situation contains personal and social conflicts which are emotionally charged for students. Teachers ask a series of inductive questions which move the discussion of the situation from a concrete to a more analytic level. The problem-posing process directs students to name the problem, understand how it applies to them, determine the causes of the problem, generalize to others, and finally, suggest alternatives or solutions to the problems.

. . . the question "why" is critical for teaching thinking skills. "Why" questions allow people to project out of their personal experiences into a broader understanding or debate of opinions.

. . . When problem-posing, the role of the teacher is not only to ask questions but to provide any necessary information that will move the dialogue to a higher level of thinking. Teachers must be careful not to impose their worldview, but to encourage students in their own critical thinking. Likewise, teachers should be cautious about assuming leadership on solutions to local problems. People from the community become their own leaders . . . as they realize community issues can be tackled. (Wallerstein 1983: 17, 19).

An example might make the technique clearer. In a women's group, a common theme is frustration with not being taken seriously when, as women, they have ideas and suggestions to make. One group's discussion might begin with a woman saying, "I just don't believe it. Last week I suggested . . . to my boss and he just shrugged, smiled at me, and said 'No, I don't think so.' It was a good idea and he just ignored it. This week Harry made the identical same suggestion and the boss thought it was great. When I said I had suggested the same thing, he said his mind must have been elsewhere." At this point other members of the group would probably share similar stories. In a coffee klatch, that might be the end of things, a sharing of frustration. In an educational setting, the educator might ask questions like:

Why might Gloria's boss not have followed her suggestion?
What might a profile of a powerful person look like?
Where and under what circumstances do women experience power in our society?
Where do they not experience power?
Under what conditions might a woman be given a lot of power in an organization?
What has been the cost to some women who have sought and achieved power, in your opinion?
What are some alternatives which women such as Gloria have in their situations?
How can women help one another to experience their work with more satisfaction?

The educator might supply readings by women authors speaking of the same thing. When the group has said its "ah-ha!'s" and has reached a fairly consensual understanding of the problem, they would then begin to look at options, things they could do in their particular situation to make a difference. One of the problems usually identified by groups in any situation of powerlessness is usually a lack of awareness on the part of the general public as to the nature and extent of the problem. Of the options posed, a group might decide to do some awareness-raising in the community at large. They could put on a play, make a quilt or poster with message squares, or design a cookbook with little vignettes dispersed between the recipes, a format used successfully by other cookbook authors for different purposes. There are many things they could decide to do and there would be many learning skills attached to whatever decisions

they made. Or, they might decide that that issue is not first priority for them and do something else. The point, however, is that talk, while good, is not enough. Sharing and learning must lead to changed behaviors, attitudes, understandings and abilities. Learning must make a difference!!!

C. Being-in-learning: Learning to Learn

I am still amazed at how many so-called educational situations expect participants to do things unassisted which they have never done before. Students in universities are asked to write essays, research papers, term papers and position papers all with the assumption that they know how to do these things. Some of these skills are taught in some schools some years but by no means all. A student with good learning strategies will know how to find out what she or he needs to know to get the job done. A student who is used to "shutting up" and waiting to be "spoon-fed", and there are many, may angrily go off and put something together and then be upset if she or he gets a low grade.

The research of Vygotsky in the USSR presents a strong case for measuring intelligence not on the basis of what people know but on the basis of what they can come to know with assistance. This then is the task of the educator, not to assume one knows, but to assist one to learn new things. The fact that success, as defined by the mainstream society, seems more often than not to run in families, leads me to believe that if parents or other significant adults in a family or community do not have particular skills such as those involved in acquiring new knowledge in a literate society, it is less likely that the children in such families will develop those skills than in those families where others have such skills already.

Any situation which calls itself educational has a responsibility to go beyond the imparting of specific knowledge and particular skills to the acquisition by learners of effective strategies for pursuing their own learning. Primary amongst such skills is the ability and the confidence to ask good questions. If an individual has been told in the past that she asks too many questions or has always been put off ("Save your questions until the end of the class" — but there is never time at the end), that individual will be not only reluctant but initially incapable of assuming responsibility for her or his own learning by asking questions. When a learner in a group I am facilitating asks a question, any question, I make a point, generally, of thanking that person and otherwise acknowledging the value and importance of the question. In addition, I ask a lot of questions myself.

Secondly, I would sometimes show the questioner how to obtain the knowledge for her/himself rather than just giving out the information if I had it. For example, one woman in a group was upset that her social worker had refused her legitimate request for a clothing voucher for a bathing suit she needed in order to participate in her son's hospital therapy program. She was told to wait two or three months for her income tax refund. Another woman told the group that the social worker had no right to know what she did with the income tax refund once received. Others said the tax refund had been deducted from their welfare cheques in past years. I did not know what the policy was. Rather than my phoning to get the information, I could use the opportunity to introduce the AID (Advice and Information Directory in Edmonton) hotline and give them an opportunity to work through a problem successfully on their own. When we use the telephone for information, we do so right then and there in the context of the

group or class. It is a real boost to self-esteem when one is able to help oneself and others in such a way. On the other hand, it may not be appropriate to use the group's time in that way depending on what else is happening at the moment. Such decisions, I find, are best made in the actual context.

Literacy is an important component of learning to learn. Again, we cannot assume that because one has a Gr. 10 Diploma that she or he is literate. In a prison where I worked many of the men had Gr. 9 "on paper" but were reading at a Gr. 3 or 4 level and did not have the basic skills for organizing their thoughts on paper. Because reading was a difficult and uncomfortable task for many of them, they tended not to read at all, which aggravated the problem and would certainly put them at a disadvantage on the outside, if not also inside a prison.

In many adult education contexts, the level of literacy is very low. Whereas literacy may not be the guiding mandate of a program, neither can it be ignored. First of all, one's activities in such a program cannot resemble those of a traditional classroom with its texts, written exercises and homework. The educator must work with others to devise new non-written means of presenting and studying material and evaluating progress. Nothing can kill a learning program faster for an illiterate individual than handing out articles to read and written assignments to do. There is nothing for that person in such a class. As educators we must begin to build educational programs around the individuals who want to learn instead of insisting that such individuals fit into existing programs.

Because of the centrality of the written word in our society, I feel strongly that literacy should become a priority in any situation where illiteracy is present, whether it was a priority to begin with or not.

A participatory education setting should also have many activities wherein each individual can develop her or his verbal acuity. A good learner in our society is one who not only knows her or his needs but can express those fluently and in a socially acceptable manner. This is sometimes a problem of vocabulary, sometimes of self-confidence and sometimes dialect.

In the case of vocabulary and self-confidence, any activities which encourage people to speak and to be challenged in a supportive manner, to reshape their words and then to try again, are useful activities. When some of the women in Abbotsfield speak, I am often left unclear as to their meaning because they have far fewer words to express differences in meaning than I do. S[illegible]k, "Do you mean . . . ?" and I offer new words to distinguish one meaning from others. I have had women come back weeks later and tell me with pride that they used a particular word in a conversation that week, and so they should be proud: they have chosen to acquire new learnings.

Dialect is an important notion for adult educators to be familiar with if they are working with marginalized communities of people. In the past, educators have talked about standard or good English and non-standard or bad English. This is a notion which excludes large groups of people from being seen as having value in our society. If a teacher tells a learner to speak correctly and criticizes that person for his "bad" English, not only is self-confidence threatened but resistance can also become the dominant behavior at that point. It makes more sense from every perspective to recognize that language is learned and to assume that whatever language forms a

person uses were and are probably appropriate in the circumstances in which they were learned. The problems occur when a person wants to participate in different contexts in which her or his familiar language patterns are not used or acceptable. New language forms are presented then not because they are inherently better but because they are better (more effective in getting what one wants and needs) *in particular circumstances*. The learner is not asked to abandon what she or he has known but rather to add on another dialect much the same as we would learn another language. That new dialect might involve a more exacting grammar, more and different vocabulary and different standards of spelling and pronunciation. It can be seen as a ticket of entry into certain job and educational goals the learner has chosen.

One reader raises the issue of those whose first language is not English but who are surrounded by an English-speaking society which influences their daily life to a large degree. She points out, rightly I believe, that a language composes and is composed of patterns which extend beyond itself to the values of the culture it expresses and that when speakers are forced to use a language other than their own, they are being coerced, in the process, into a system of patterns and values not their own. My response to this issue is to suggest that, where a whole community of people speak a language, that is the language in which this type of education should take place, even if the action taken must occur in the medium of the dominant language. In a situation where a group is composed of speakers of many languages then a common language for dialogue and action will need to be agreed upon.

D. Being-in-action

1. Learning to Find and Act on Resources

A participatory education program will provide numerous opportunities for learners to become familiar with and to practice using the resources available to whatever specific context they are in. It is not enough to tell a group of inmates, immigrants or welfare recipients what their rights are. When events indicate that these rights are being violated or simply not taken advantage of, it is useful not only for the individual but for the whole group to participate in the steps to right that situation.

It is often said that information is power. We cannot carry all relevant information in our heads, but we can learn where that information can be obtained. As a simple example, how many people are familiar with the number and kind of resources available to the individual in the average public library or from various government departments? The Abbotsfield Women's Project operates with the support of the Consumer Education Project of the community college. It is most appropriate to offer these women the opportunity to experience using the consumer guides available at the library in order to guide their purchase of inexpensive quality items with a good repair record. On the other hand, I wonder how many of them have good choices as to what they can buy? It may be a matter of picking up whatever is available secondhand. We cannot afford to make easy assumptions in this kind of education, because all too often, the life experiences of those with whom we work are not identical or even similar to our own.

Participants should also have the chance to learn what educational services are available to them at what cost. In Alberta, many poor people do not realize there is financial assistance available for continuing education as well as for full-time studies. The evening student can get his or her tuition, busfare, and babysitting costs up to a total of $300 per year reimbursed by applying to the appropriate government department.

As an educator, I am more concerned with resourc*ing* than with resourc*es* because I know from past experience that information *about* resources is not the only factor involved in making good use of available resources. People need to have experienced success in accessing, evaluating and using various resources if they are to have the confidence to try out new ones, as well as finding new ways of making use of old resources. I had told a young native man serving time in prison about the programs and financing available at the Alberta Vocational Centre. When he was out on parole, he came to see me to find out what to do in order to register. I suggested he make an appointment with a counsellor there, which he did. Two weeks after his appointment date, I saw him and asked what had happened. He was upset. He had gone to his appointment and sat in the lobby dutifully waiting for the receptionist there to call his name. Having had no experience whatsoever with the procedures for appointments, he had not gone to her to announce himself and say why he was there. Of course, no one had called him: he was to have gone to the counselling department at the other end of the building. After one hour of waiting, he left, upset with what he perceived to be yet another put-off.

In another instance, the *Edmonton Journal* reported, a young man was told he could not see a counsellor until he had filled out an application form. He was there to apply for a literacy program. He explained to the woman that he could not fill out a form because he could not read, but it was to no avail and he left in frustration. In both of these instances, a client is expected to follow the procedures of an institution, the institution assuming no responsibility for his inability to do so. A participatory educator recognizes that she or he does not know at what stage of trying to use available resources a person will have trouble, and thus, is there not doing *for* but following through that process *with* the learner.

2. Making Decisions

Learning is a form of action, and so many of the items in the last section apply also to this one. Education must enable learners to act in ways that fulfill their own lives and contribute to the betterment of the larger community as well. That means transforming not only individual lives but also society.

People in disadvantaged contexts often do not experience themselves as capable of acting upon those contexts. They experience themselves as being on the receiving end of whatever power — industry, government, men, bureaucracy, etc. — doles out. Here as elsewhere, one learns by doing.

Action can be taken on several fronts:

1. It can be taken upon one's own life with no immediate effect upon others.
   e.g. • applying for a job or training program;
   • embarking upon a health or fitness regimen.

2. It can be taken within one's family or small community.

e.g.
- learning to prepare family meals "from scratch" rather than relying on expensive and less healthy prepared foods with all the accompanying additives;
- registering as a society with a board of directors and taking on responsibility for child care in a project, thus moving away from a dependency relationship on the larger bureaucracy;
- starting a food cooperative for food savings, or, a sewing cooperative amongst seamstresses for income purposes;
- advertising their participatory education group as an invitation for others in the community.

3. It can be taken by an individual or group upon the larger community or some system within it.

e.g.
- writing a letter of protest to the government re: the proposed de-indexing of the family allowance payments explaining why that would have a very negative effect on women whose only undesignated income is the family allowance cheque;
- laying a complaint of malpractice against a particular team of medical practitioners in a death one saw as totally avoidable;
- visiting local supermarkets to request that they stock organically grown, non-chemically treated foodstuffs.

The examples given extend from decisions wherein one takes the world as given and tries to cope better within it, to decisions wherein an individual or a group of people take on very powerful systems which they feel have affected their lives in ways they do not consider to be beneficial.

I should emphasize that I do not believe it is the job of the educator to initiate specific actions but rather to share her or his expertise with the group in order that they may carefully and wisely think through the decision-making process anticipating as many alternative implications of possible actions as possible. The reason for not initiating actions is that in doing so, we create yet another dependency situation.

3. Creating

Creative expression is another form of acting upon one's world. When a person makes something unique, not something from an assembly line, but some one-of-a-kind artifact of one's being, then one is in a very tangible way changing one's lifeworld. When a community of people engages in such a creative undertaking, the product is a statement of who that community is and an acknowledgment of the process which went into its making.

In a woman's group such as Abbotsfield, such a creative activity might be the making of a quilt each of whose squares might tell some aspect of the lives of women. Or, it might be a book of stories which raises questions such that it not only tells the stories of one group of lives but also raises questions for the reader to ferret out her or his own stories and awarenesses.

In a prison, it might be one of the above or perhaps a piece of theatre created by a group of inmates in order that others may know and understand their situation better.

In a mental hospital, a group of patients might decide to create an in-house message-bearer in which through picture, drawing, story and poem, they can contribute to self-esteem and hope for one another.

A group of native teenagers might decide to work on the art of the oral story as a renewal of the ancient tradition for teaching and celebrating the strengths of their culture. Part of their creative product might be to go to the "four winds" to share their story of celebration with non-natives, or other native groups.

A creative work is always in some sense a gift. The creating of it is a gift of life to the creators. It moves them from one point of awareness to another. Their sense of ability is lifted and strengthened. The sharing of the creation upon completion is a gift to others, hopefully one which stimulates the creative energies inherent to that group of others.

The activities which emerge in any particular group are a response to the needs and personalities of that group. Therefore a guide such as this would err to list a set of techniques as if it were a grab-bag from which to choose. It is not intended to do that but rather to stimulate the creative thinking of possibilities which are open to you the reader in the educational situations in which you find yourself. One set of specifics may be found in the chapter on Abbotsfield.

IV. Evaluation

Introduction

In participatory education, evaluation is a continuous activity in the teaching/learning process, not an activity which merely follows it. All too often, educational evaluation has been seen as being limited to testing which happens after some segment of a learning program and is intended to measure to what degree the educator has succeeded in presenting the content and/or the learner has succeeded in learning it. This view of evaluation puts the power and the responsibility for the program outcomes in the hands of the educators and leaves the learner as yet another object in the learning enterprise, one which is done to and done for rather than one who is done with. In keeping with the nature of participatory education, all participants ("learners" and facilitators) are encouraged to reflect throughout the learning process and on the basis of those reflections upon their experiences, to redirect, modify and change both the directions and the process towards their realization as they deem appropriate.

A. Planning as Evaluation

Evaluation begins when a group of two or more decides they want to have an educational program of some sort. The first thing they do is evaluate their own situation and try to clarify the needs and intents that situation calls for in a learning program. Planning is an evaluatory act. In industry, it might be called a needs assessment. In participatory education, we call it reflection, and the two are not the same. We sit down together and ask ourselves where we are, and where we want to go? Are there others who would like to join us? Would their needs and wants be sufficiently

like our own that we could work together and support one another in our learning endeavors? If after discussion, thought and some practical inquiries the answer is yes, then the initiators might wish to draw a larger group of people into the planning at this point before proceeding further.

B. Planning as the Giving of Form to an Idea

In this guide, both the administrative concerns chapter and the curriculum chapter deal with aspects of the planning process in participatory education. The whole process of this type of education is not a means to an end; it is the giving birth to and actualization of desirable ideas. Such a process happens within an on-going evaluation of the context in which participants find themselves as they attempt, via learning and acting, to reshape that context according to the vision which takes form as they work together. A participatory education process cannot be separated from the act of evaluating because in it, we are continually evaluating our knowledge, ourselves, our relationships with others and our world. As we learn, our behavior changes. As our ideas change, we see the world differently and, in fact, the world we see is a different world.

Each day is a new day and yesterday's plan is no longer an exact fit. We evaluate each day, each step of the way to redefine and redirect our learning/acting together.

C. Beginning a Meeting: Why are we here *today?*

One technique for focusing together as a group and for checking on where individuals are coming from on any particular day is to begin each meeting or class together by asking the question. "Why are you here today?" An individual may give the same answer each time, may vary it slightly or may come out with something very different depending on the context of her or his life at that moment. Because each person participates in this activity, it is also a way of ensuring that quieter members of a group have an opportunity to influence the direction of a group.

There is a danger in underestimating the need for remaining in focus. Focus is critical to movement. One reader suggests the additional focusing activity of "temperature checks" throughout discussion, e.g., "Where are we?" A good idea!

D. Shared Facilitation of the Process

In the act of facilitating a group of people being together in dialogue or other shared activity, the facilitator is constantly making decisions on the basis of what is happening, what to respond to and what to ignore, which issues are key and should be pursued, which resources the group has or can get or not in order to meet any given issue or situation. Therefore, the facilitator is called upon to evaluate continually during the course of facilitating the process. If one or two people do this all of the time, they have more than their share of power in directing and redirecting the course of the group. In the beginning this is probably appropriate in that other members may feel neither the confidence nor the ability to take that on. As people indicate a willingness to be so involved or even a curiosity as to whether they could, they should be encouraged to take their turn leading the group through whatever is happening.

In Abbotsfield, we found that a good place to begin to encourage members of the group to facilitate our learning process was with the writing of the group journal as described below. Those who lack skill or confidence in their literacy skills may choose not to facilitate in this way but can do so in others. If people with relatively few literacy skills are willing to try the group journal, they need encouragement rather than correction of spelling and other errors unless they ask for such help.

E. The Group Journal

At the end of each meeting in Abbotsfield, we collectively contributed our thoughts to the writing of a group journal. The facilitator would ask, "What happened today? What did we do today? What did we learn today?" We did this for many reasons. It was a way of sharing perspectives. One or two people might attach very different meanings to the day than did others. As a facilitator it was important for me to see what others thought of as being important because it was not always what I thought had been important. It was a way of acknowledging movement in individuals and in the group as a whole. Someone might say "Nancy spoke today. Hurrah for Nancy!" as a way of affirming the courage a previously bashful member had demonstrated.

It was a way of sharing responsibility for what the group did and how, and, for directing plans for future meetings together.

This activity took anywhere from five to fifteen minutes but was well worthwhile. One cannot evaluate one's actions without first having named them. This activity forced us to name our actions as a group and thereby be able to determine their relevance to the intents we had stated and restated.

F. Evaluation Sessions

Periodically, meeting time should be set aside solely for the purpose of evaluating a period of activities and planning ahead for another period thereof. Such a meeting would include a review of the original intents, the activities undertaken since that time and an assessment of the value of those activities. In the event the activities did not reflect the original intents, the group should strive to understand what was at work in causing them to participate in activities which did not contribute to those intents. Was it that the situation shifted or was it that the intents had been too superficial to begin with? Was there some other accounting for the difference.?

An evaluation session might also include time to reflect on the group's adherence to the principles they had elected to follow from the beginning. One way I have begun this with a group is to have each person rate themselves on a scale of one to ten for each principle. Then, if participants so choose, they can talk about why they may have rated themselves low or high on any particular item. People will often choose to keep their ratings to themselves, but if one person expresses her personal desire to raise her own "score" on one item, that usually invites anyone else with a common concern to share it. This is one of the ways which, step by step, a group may grow to better understandings of these principles and of their value in serving as guideposts for a group's development.

One problem which arose in Abbotsfield was that the group would decide on a series of activities, but those activities would frequently be sidestepped or disrupted by

someone's need to talk about her problems. Often it was a new member who had not yet had the opportunity to share her life in that way with the group and thereby establish that intimate bond with other members of the group. As a facilitator I felt torn between wanting to keep the group on task and yet recognizing that one of the intents of the group was to support other women in dealing with their problems.

My response to that frustration was to name it for the group in a general way (i.e., I would simply state that I noticed we were not on the chosen topic any longer) and ask if they wanted to stick to the task they had decided upon, or, if it was more important to share conversations with each other. Sometimes they opted as a group for the task and made other options available for the one who needed to talk. Sometimes, they just listened. *When plans are made, no one can know beforehand what the context will become.* On-going evaluation mechanisms help us to be responding to current needs rather than those which have become no longer relevant. Perhaps one reason this is especially important in working with persons who have been marginalized is that there is less predictability than there is in working with people in the middle-class. You may plan an activity with a dozen people and on the day it is to take place, two mothers will be home with children who have chicken pox, someone else will be at the doctor's, someone else in court and someone else at home in tears or at the social worker's begging for more money. The women who asked for sewing classes may have found jobs or training programs between the time of planning and the time of following through on those plans. Long-term planning as we have known it in other contexts does not work for a variety of reasons and thus the need to evaluate everything on an on-going basis.

G. Photostories

The process of producing a photostory is an evaluation process. In Abbotsfield, for example, the group wanted to have some created object at the end of their first year together. They decided on a book of stories with pictures. The process of working out who that book was for, why, what it would include and how it would be produced was a process of naming what the group had meant to their lives as individuals and was also a coming to realize that their purpose as a group had expanded from helping themselves to helping others as well. They wanted to share the good news of what women can do for one another when they learn and work together as a group.

Photostories can take a variety of different forms and serve different purposes. Each photo taken means someone pointed a camera in a particular way. How we do that is not accidental. What is significant enough to capture in a photo is different for each person.

In Abbotsfield, the camera was left on the table at all times. If someone saw a picture, she took it. When the pictures came back from the developers, we all looked at them and talked about the experiences. For a time, they were posted and eventually, put in an album.

Near the end of the year, the group decided to share their "journey" with others through the medium of a photostory. To that end, they picked their favorite photos, photos which captured the flavor of what our group was about and wrote stories to accompany them. The product was a celebration of the time we had spent together.

This is but one way of using the photostory tool. The possibilities are as vast as the imagination. In an ESL class, I use it very differently, there trying to enable the students to make meaning of their lives in English by telling stories of their experiences and sharing them with others. Sometimes, each individual adds a story from her or his experience to a collection of such stories from other members of the class, an activity which serves to bridge the gap from one land to another, to make connections between people of many cultures, to acknowledge the abilities demonstrated by people in trying to cope with the difficulties inherent to intercultural integration, and, to learn the new language. At other times, students work together to formulate stories which reflect their collective experience. There are the stories which give rise to awareness of social issues and to visions of social change.

H. Written Reports

Periodic written reports are another means by which members of the group can check their perceptions with each other and also be accountable to funding agencies where that is appropriate. In a group where literacy is a problem, the facilitators might choose to do this task rather than ask members of the group to do it. If so, it is important and valuable to be sure and share those with the rest of the group.

In Abbotsfield, I learned a great deal in doing just that. I had written up a mid-year report for the community college. Because I was writing it, rather than the group as a whole, I chose to write it in report style, namely in the third person. Because I was writing primarily for the college, some sections used vocabulary that I knew the majority of the women would not understand. Other sections, where I felt it was important that the whole group understand and have input, I was careful to write simply. In any event, carefully chosen though my sections were, when I shared them with the group, we did not make it past the first paragraph when one of the women said to me, a perplexed look upon her face, "Virginia, you sound like you're outside of us somewheres looking down at us from somewheres." I asked how I could change that and she replied, "Well, how come you don't say 'we'?" This is a question with which I continue to struggle.

It brought home to me that any piece of writing is done for someone or ones and that to share it with others is to have it interpreted very differently by different people. I considered doing reports in the first person but the problem is that I belong to two different "we's" in that situation. I belong to the group and am a full participant in every sense of the word but I am also part of the "we" which includes the audience each piece of writing is intended for, the "we" which is the educators, and by that, in this case, I mean those who are paid to enable learning programs for others. As educators, we have a facilitative function different from other members of the group although with time, that difference should become less and less. Meanwhile, I would suggest that different reports be written for different audiences.

Such reports might include a brief history, intents, resources, activities planned, undertaken and those completed, and, an evaluation summary with suggestions for

I. Individual Journals

As an educator, especially in any endeavor which is new in some way, I keep a fairly detailed journal which includes my notes in preparation for a class or meeting and my comments, reflections, questions, and observations following it. Not only does such writing help me to remember significant events in the educational enterprise but it helps me to see over time a perspective which enables me to learn about my process as an educator and how I might want to alter that. I record critical incidents, emotional reactions, theoretical responses, a log of activities and events, observations about individuals, ideas for future planning, and notes to myself re: things I have to do prior to the next meeting.

In Abbotsfield, there were two of us facilitating the group and the journals also served as a basis for our reflections together with one another. We normally took as long with one another in debriefing our sessions with the group as we did with the group itself, a luxury educators cannot normally afford but one which was important in that we were piloting an idea and a process which was relatively unique in our experience.

It was interesting to learn several months into that program that one of the participants was also keeping a regular journal and that it was her way of identifying for herself what she was learning each day. In situations where improved literacy skills are an intent for a group or certain members thereof, a regular journal is one way of encouraging writing development if individuals so choose. In that event, the journal is not to be corrected by the teacher but rather shared with someone, such as the teacher, whose literacy skills are good and who is willing to respond, in writing, to the individual writing the journal. I often use student journals as a way of personalizing my contact with learners as well as encouraging them to write and express themselves. The journal in that case becomes a place of written dialogue between two people.

CHAPTER 5

ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

A participatory education project could take place in someone's house with little or no money or resources required. The fact that such is seldom the case leads me to believe that **at present**, such groups need to be initiated by educators or teachers with awareness as to their value and with access to the resources which facilitate their existence. Thus this short chapter is intended for educators, especially administrators, who are intending to initiate participatory education programs in the communities. Basically, it looks at two kinds of problems and issues: one is the kind of administrative support required to do this kind of work; the other is the nature of the relationship with funders and higher administrators who may initially have some difficulty with the unusual needs of this atypical form of education.

I. Facility

Educators must begin to realize that many people do not attach the same meaning to a facility that educators traditionally have. As educators we have tended to see "facility" in a very functional way as a room or rooms big enough, comfortable enough and adequately furnished to meet the needs of a group of learners. We have thought less often of the aura surrounding a facility, and of the personal meanings people attach to it. By that I mean that people may be intimidated by a facility which is for us totally neutral. If, for example, a person has known only failure in schools, is it likely that person will have the confidence to come to a school to learn again? Some are intimidated by the size of our large institutions, some by the affluence of their surrounding neighborhoods. Others may not find suitable transportation options.

The facility should be selected partly on availability and partly on the meanings a group of learners might attach to it. I am quite confident that had we tried to hold the Abbotsfield project in a community college classroom, no one would have come. Instead we chose a familiar setting, a house, in their neighborhood, within easy walking distance of most of their homes. For some members of the group, that has served as a transition and they are now comfortable walking into the community college and using its facilities.

If one has no choice but to use a facility which calls forth negative meanings for participants, some effort should be made to reshape that facility. In the case of a prison, posters on the walls and plants on the ledges are an example. Even the most sterile classroom can be transformed by such a simple act as the placing of a fresh flower in a vase on a desk or table. To us, such a gesture might be only "a nice touch". To another, it might be "the presence of something alive".

II. Childcare

Formal education programs for adults have most often assumed that adult learners could and would make their own arrangement for childcare. This has effectively ensured lack of access to education for large numbers of people, especially women and especially those with young children.

women and especially those with young children.

Finding solutions to childcare problems is sometimes a question of money but it is also a question of how parents see their role as parents. Many parents do not want to drop their children in a daycare centre and go elsewhere for a learning program. They or their children may have been victims of child abuse in which case they want to be on top of the kind of care their children are getting and they want to be there if their children need them. Others may be worried about the possibility of their child being snatched by a parent who does not have custody.

At Abbotsfield the first month was somewhat of a nightmare as children who had not been away from their mothers before would cry and leave the mainfloor children's area to climb all over mommy in our rooms upstairs. After four to six weeks, peace suddenly arrived one morning as the children realized that this was a safe and fun place to be. They knew the other children now and they knew mom was there if they needed her. It is wonderful now for me to greet these children in the morning and receive a smile and a toy thrust up for my inspection rather than a howl of protest.

It is important in working with parents of young children to provide funds for childcare. Whereas middle-class moms will often form cooperatives and take turns with the childcare, those are moms who can hire a babysitter and go out in the evening if they so choose. Poor parents do not have the money for babysitters and may participate in a learning program primarily because they need time out from constant childcare. For the sake of their mental health, we dare not assume that they should be willing to take turns looking after others' children too.

III. Confidentiality

Record-keeping is a standard procedure in educational institutions. We keep cumulative records on the learners noting their "progress" from time to time. We record problems the student has and solutions we propose. We take note of whether our advice is followed or neglected. In working with marginalized persons, I have found that confidentiality is paramount if we want people to participate genuinely and freely in a group.

In Abbotsfield, it was asked on day one whether what people said would go beyond the room or not. We agreed it would not and have all tried hard to keep that agreement. One woman belongs to another women's group which she enjoys in that she learns how to do specific things like make chocolates or knit. She says, however, that they cannot talk freely because a social worker is there. They like the woman but they also know that her job compels her to do certain things, such as report back what goes on in the group. There is no freedom of discussion when there is a fear of consequences. The economically disadvantaged survive as best they can in the face of enormous odds against them. If participatory education is to be an effective way for such people to address their own learning needs, educators must be willing to see record-keeping as something the group as a whole does, on their own terms.

Recognizing that funders have a responsibility nonetheless to ensure that public dollars are being spent in the ways that those who make the proposals say they are being spent, it may be necessary for a group to negotiate with educational administrators a means of satisfying government's need for accountability with the group's need for confidentiality. In some cases, it may be in the form of written reports which leave out

names but give data. Or, it may be in another form altogether such as the photostory which Abbotsfield put together. The central thing to remember is perhaps the right of the individuals involved to have a say in the kind of record-keeping or reporting they are willing to be involved in and responsible for. **In no way should the right of confidentiality be violated.**

IV. Questioning the Numbers Game

Accountability to funders is a given in the public sphere. Unfortunately, that often becomes a numbers game where we determine a program's value on the basis of how *many* people register and attend rather than on the basis of the *quality* of experience people have therein. Because it is more difficult to assess the quality of lived experience, we seldom make the effort to do so. It seems to me that if three out of ten people make very significant positive changes in their lives as the result of a learning program that this is of greater value than thirty people merely attending an event and saying yes, that is good. The purpose of participatory education is to enable people to experience their lives in ways they deem to be better. That cannot be addressed by counting numbers.

Administrators should be prepared to assess value in terms of quality of experience rather than quantity. They might want to ask questions like: How many people made decisions to take advantage of more traditional learning programs during their participation in a group? How many found employment and attributed their participation in the group as having something to do with that? How do the participants talk about their experience? What do they say they learned? What observable differences do the facilitators see in individuals' ability to do for themselves?

V. The Question of Time

We have often judged our success or failure as educators on the basis of whether learners acquired a skill or body of content within a given timeframe. Whereas I see no problem in setting up timeframes within which we hope our stated intents may be accomplished, it has been my experience that my timeframes are often totally irrelevant, given the lived experience of the devalued person. Generally, I underestimate how long it will take for a person or group to recognize, sort and dispose of "the garbage" in their lives before or while they can get on with positive action which will carry them forward into new, preferred possibilities. If a person has known a lifetime of failure, abuse, broken trust and pain, it is not reasonable for an educator to assume that such a one can just lay all that aside and get on with the task at hand. It takes time to learn new behaviors and unlearn old ones. It takes time to learn to trust. We are often asking people to try on behaviors, such as trust, which in their everyday context would be against the interests of their survival. And as they learn, so do we. It all takes time.

I suggest to administrators that they not assume a program has failed if it did not accomplish its stated intents within the allotted timeframe. The failure may be in the timeframe so allotted.

I add here a comment written by one of the readers for us to ponder: "Timeframes as a planning and bureaucratic tool are used as a means of meeting political and bureaucratic agendas of the agencies that 'deliver' education. They may be entirely destructive. The participatory question is '**whose** timeframe?'

VI. Staff "Roles"

As supervisors of staff working in participatory education, administrators should be aware that staff roles in this type of work are often much broader and less fixed or rigid than they are in traditional kinds of education. This has implications for supervision and also for hiring, since a much broader range of skills and depth of background is required.

Traditional models of human service work have distinguished very carefully between the roles of various workers: teacher, social worker, psychologist, doctor, lawyer, community developer, entertainer, etc. Furthermore, each of the persons acting in these roles has known it was a role and at 4:30 p.m., has generally left the role in the office and resumed her or his role as mother, father, neighbor, individual, etc. One's life and one's work were not normally considered as one but as two distinct aspects of one's total existence.

In working with the marginalized, I have found it to be impractical to act out of just one role to the exclusion of others. It has been my experience that such people need, more than anything else, to be related to as whole persons. I cannot do that if I am wearing only this hat or that. So, I teach, I listen, I heal, I advocate, I challenge, I even 'shove' if necessary. I also receive, and learn, and speak my own true word for others to receive or reject. I do not mean that I forget that I am an educator, to the contrary. At all times I remember that it is my responsibility to enable others to learn but I find that in order to do that I must be willing to relax the boundaries of defining my work, boundaries which work reasonably well when working with people who are successful and at home in the social system as it exists. Many inmates, immigrants, illiterates and poor people are not at home in the system and feel pushed around from role to role to role. They need desperately to experience themselves as whole, valuable, acceptable human beings and they are unlikely to open themselves to learning and to change unless they can experience wholeness in doing so.

VII. The Question of Power

As the reader has seen throughout the previous chapters, participatory education involves a redistribution of the authority and responsibility inherent within traditional educational models. From naming the needs to evaluating their actualization, participants stand in the place of expert, for they are indeed the experts in their life experience.

This poses a real risk for the administrator whose job it is to assign funds and account for their use. I see no easy solution to this dilemma. Administrators who are interested in exploring alternative modes of education for the disadvantaged must, if they select participatory education, be willing to have enough trust in people's ability and right to plan and carry forth their own educational futures to allow them to do so. It is a risk in that we cannot predict the outcomes with the same certainty we can when we remain in control. But, is it any greater risk than the risk society runs when so many of its members remain on the fringes unable and unwilling to give to the society from the untouched potential which is theirs' by right of birth? At what cost to society are such people maintained in their status as on-the-fringe?

VIII. Locating Interested Participants

Whereas my colleague from Abbotsfield and myself remain convinced that this form of education is a most valuable alternative to traditional approaches to education with people on the margins of society, we acknowledge that the biggest problem we have faced is in finding people who are willing to participate in it. On the one hand, there must be a focus around which such a program "happens". In our case, it was "Money and Us", a consumer education theme. On the other hand, there has to be an acceptance that it will not necessarily be this theme which draws people together.

In the case of Abbotsfield, I do not think any two people came for the same stated reason. Whereas I think that is true for a lot of adult education offerings, it is perhaps even more true here. This has caused me to pay even more attention to the so-called support aspects of a program which may be more central to some participants than the so-called focus. The childcare set-up, the human relationships amongst all participants, a feeling of "home-y-ness" in the facility, the information network — all of these things are not just support to consumer education in Abbotsfield; they are central to the meaning of the program for its participants.

So it is that in our early organization, we need to develop, as educators, a real "feel" for the neighborhood or other context into which we are going. We need to name for ourselves the "real" needs of the population. In going into Abbotsfield, we knew we would be working with people who had fewer financial resources than is the norm in our city. Having spent time there, we now see that the true poverty of that neighborhood is not a lack of dollars so much as it is a lack of human contact and a lack of hope. They still need more money and more information and skills in managing the money they have. But is seems highly unlikely to us that they will be in any way able to achieve either until some of the underlying sources and maintainers of this "other" poverty are examined and worked through. Therefore, in attracting people to participate perhaps we should be appealing to various levels of need and not just that of consumer education per se.

Similarly, in working in a prison setting, I quickly learned that although I was hired to teach English and Math, it was impossible to do that without dealing with the incredible alienation, loneliness, and anger produced by the men's experience of their lives prior to and during their incarceration. I found it impossible to confront the real problems in that setting because most of the staff were concerned only with security and did not believe in any possible good coming from programming. Without the administrative backup and understanding we need to confront the real problems, we are completely handicapped as educators in getting down to the real work of education.

As educators, therefore, we may also have an education job to do with our superiors. Frequently, they are well-intended people who simply lack sufficient information and will respond positively to the new information and insights we might provide. I have learned that it is highly presumptuous on my part to assume that my superiors, by function of their authority, should necessarily understand the roots of the problems which educational programs need to address. They need my contributions as much as I need theirs.

I can see participatory education happening in two general types of settings: the captive setting and the community setting. By captive setting, I refer to a situation in which learners experience little or no choice in their lives, such as those institutions like prisons, mental hospitals and certain types of group home situations where dwellers have no choice about their location and length of stay. In such settings, it is imperative that they *do* have choices concerning their participation or lack of it in an educational program. The whole concept would be defeated by telling someone they had to participate in it. I recognize, as in all settings, participants will have a variety of reasons for their participation (eg. it looks good on their parole application) and I accept all reasons as valid. The important thing is that the choice belongs to the individual; participants should not be coerced by staff.

It goes without saying that it would be equally ludicrous to force staff to work in participatory fashion if that is not their experience or their wish. Staff for this type of work must be chosen for their willingness and enthusiasm as well as their skills and backgrounds.

In the community setting, only personal contact will convince people that there is something of value worth trying out. That does not necessarily mean that the educators have to knock on every door in the community. (We tried that approach - - it did not work either!) It means that people who are trusted need to understand what the possibilities are and be willing to share those with interested community members. Our best link in the Abbotsfield community was with the family support workers. (A family support worker is like an advocate and counsellor for a family on welfare; she or he does not control the money a parent or parents get.) They were trusted and liked by the women and their suggestions were therefore taken seriously. In other communities, it might be the public health nurse or the kindergarten teacher or the janitor in the housing complex. In the early stages of developing a project in a community, key "bridges" such as these people need to be found who have the trust of several people in a community and at the same time do not share the general mistrust of professionals which is so common in poverty situations. Once a few participants have come forth and begun to participate, in either a community setting or an institutional one, if the program is serving a need, they will tell others and the group will grow. *It is important, therefore, for administrators to realize that initial numbers are unlikely to reflect the strength of the group over time.* In most educational offerings, the initial size is larger than the finishing size. In this type of work, if we are successful, numbers are more likely to grow over time.

Whereas continuing education programs advertise their wares through written media, these are unlikely to attract participants in the settings mentioned. I suggest a written proposal for the professionals in the community and another easy-to-read one for the distribution through schools, newsletters or whatever other written media are in the community already, but we cannot depend on those; they serve as back-up for personal contact. The reader is referred to Part II for further specifics on how we connected with members of the community in Abbotsfield.

PART II

THE ABBOTSFIELD WOMEN'S PROJECT: A PILOT PROJECT IN PARTICIPATORY EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the previous section, the reader has seen glimpses of this group of women as they have worked together to learn, to better understand themselves and their world, and to support one another in acting in ways which make life easier and fuller for themselves and their children. This section is committed to describing in some detail the project in its wholeness, from the original conceptualization, through the processes engaged, to the outcomes as we currently know them. Of great value, in my eyes at least, are the words of the women themselves.

From October of 1985 until June of 1986, for two hours each Thursday morning, a small group of women on low incomes gathered in the upstairs of an Edmonton Housing Authority house to share and learn together while their preschool children were cared for on the main floor. (Since September of 1986 until the present, the group has continued to meet, now on Friday mornings, but as I am not a regular part of the group this year, the majority of the content within this chapter comes from the first year). Then, and now, people share their stories, their problems, and their dreams and help one another to address their everyday needs while at the same time learning to access the community resources they require to make their lives easier and fuller. Between meetings, individuals are often in touch by phone or in person to support and help one another in very concrete ways such as interpreting at appointments, giving referrals, or doing some task on behalf of the group. **The major difference between this learning program and others is that the facilitators are there to help people identify WHAT they want to learn, HOW they want to learn it, and to help them do just that. The belief behind this stance is that if people can learn to take control of their learning in one context, they come that much closer to being in greater control of their lives in general.**

CHAPTER 6

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

I. HISTORY

The project was initiated through the Consumer Education Project of the Community Education Division of Grant MacEwan Community College. The Consumer Education Project staff have traditionally done short-term presentations and workshops on a variety of consumer themes throughout the city of Edmonton. One of their most popular presentations is a short series called "The Money Plan" in which people have the opportunity to set up a budget after having set goals and priorized them. Staff were feeling a need for some kind of take-home materials at a simple reading level which learners could use for review purposes. One of the staff had spent considerable time researching what was available already by way of materials and had concluded that, given the minimal formal educational background of many of the learners they encountered, there was a need to prepare materials at an easy reading level.

It was at this point that I was invited into the picture. I had been approached as someone who could simplify the language of such materials and work together with staff in their preparation. As I talked with staff and heard more about the learners, I began to question whether such learners were in fact likely to use printed materials as a medium for learning because, in my experience, any adult with a literacy level as low as they had described is uncomfortable with reading and avoids it whenever possible. I asked if they had heard of the participatory research which was being done in Toronto. They had not but were interested.

There was one other question staff had been wondering about and now dared to wonder aloud: was it possible that on occasion they were trying to teach people to budget money when these people did not have enough money to budget? Were there other skills, other information, which might serve them better as consumers? Were there other needs which had to be met in conjunction with consumer issues? Such questions gave rise to a dialogue between staff and myself in which we saw a need to look long and hard at the relationship between the intended learning content and the learning/teaching process itself.

Through on-going conversations between myself, Bev Downing (the supervisor of the Consumer Education Project), and various others who had been involved, a plan gradually took shape for a pilot project in participatory education. We had the summer to work out where and with whom we might work in this project. We talked with the Women's Centre downtown. They were interested and willing to have us put up a poster and see who responded. We talked with the Bissell Women's Drop-In, an inner city centre. They too were interested. Then we spoke with a group of social workers in the Beverly area who told us about the Abbotsfield community which seemed to have a real dearth of any support services for the numerous recipients of social assistance who lived there. It was suggested that we contact members of the Christian Reformed Church in the area who were renting a housing unit in order to do women's and children's programming. We did and they were happy to let us use the facility one morning a week or more if desired. We felt satisfied that Abbotsfield was where we should offer our pilot project.

Now came the hard part. How were we to attract participants to this endeavor? Bev and I struggled with the contradiction between the notion of participatory eduction which says the group decides what to learn and how, and the usual practice of inviting people to learn around a particular chosen topic. A large part of our struggling around that dilemma had to do with our mandate as a consumer education project. Whereas we did not feel limited to consumer issues alone, we did feel obligated to focus our efforts around them. It did not seem likely that people would respond to an invitation to come to a "participatory education project" since no one would have the vaguest idea what that meant. So, we decided to market our idea around the theme of "Money and Us". We prepared a written sheet which we proceeded to rewrite three times, each time more simply, in the hope that it would be both easier to read and hopefully of greater interest to those with whom we wanted to connect. Language was then, and continues to be, one of the major stumbling blocks to communicating with those people whose worldview is so different from our own.

Our advertising ready, we remained aware that the written mode was not the most useful way of reaching people, that people in the community had little reason to trust printed materials, and that this fact was not immediately conducive to what we were trying to do. Nonetheless, we went ahead distributing fliers in mailboxes in the area and through the schools whose principals then agreed to send them home with the student newsletters. We also met with public health personnel, social workers, and family support workers to tell them about our project in the hopes that they would recommend it to their clients. *It was interesting that of all the people who came to the project over the year, not one single person ever came because of seeing a written notice.* In every case someone they knew had told them about it, either a family support worker or a friend. In one case, a woman had been told about it by her support worker and was then reminded by the letter in her box. In another case, a woman had been told she had to come. She came only once although she had told us she had enjoyed it and would be back. I have come to believe that in working with this kind of a group there has to be some sense of trust for people to be willing to meet together and that this trust is only built over a long period of time.

On the first morning, Bev and I waited, wondering if anyone would come or if fifty would come. We had no idea. We had hired two people to look after the children until the group could decide what kind of child care they would like to have. That morning, two women from the community came. Slowly, one by one, the group increased in number until, by Christmas, we had anywhere from six to ten at each meeting in addition to all of the children who accompanied them.

It may be of interest to the reader to note how the group became a women's group. Bev and I did not plan it that way. We felt that as an educational institution we had an obligation to respond to the needs of that community as they presented themselves and we knew there were unemployed men there also. Although one man phoned to inquire and said he would come, by the third week there were still no men present and there was beginning to be some participant shape to what was happening. It was the women who said they wanted it to be a women's group, for the time being at least. They said that if there were men present they would not feel free to say the things that they did and that it was important for them to be able to share freely and openly with other women.

In the course of our meetings, two men have come, both spouses of women participants. The first time, everyone went out of their way to make the man comfortable. He did most of the talking. The second time, I was not there but was told he was

largely ignored; the women apparently had their own agenda and were not about to let it be taken over.

II. DESIGN

A. Educator Intents

By definition, participatory education involves all of the participants in the planning and emergence of the curriculum. Nonetheless, the educator, based upon the limited knowledge she or he has been able to amass with regard to people living in a particular context, has a certain set of hopes and expectations with regard to what an educational enterprise in that community might work towards realizing. These are the intents with which Bev and I began our work in Abbotsfield:

1. That the community college become experienced by this low-income community as a presence of learning, of assistance, of encouragement and of hope;

2. That community participants move toward greater responsibility for their own learning individually and collectively;

3. That participants shall, with the combination of information, skill-development opportunities, referral, support and concrete assistance, move on to employment (where appropriate and desired) and to regular learning and training opportunities in the community;

4. That participants shall experience joy in their learning together;

5. That new people shall become involved in the project as others move on;

6. That not only should participants become more skilled as consumers but that they should become also more critically aware of the broader context of consumer issues;

7. That mothers shall take increasing responsibility for and involvement in planning creative, healthful programs for their younger children involved in the project; and,

8. That appropriate college staff have the opportunity to learn from the people of this community what their lives are like and how the educator might best respond to them.

B. Logistics

1. Place:

Thanks to the generous cooperation of the church which rents the unit, we had free use of an Edmonton Housing Authority house on Abbotsfield Road. Most of the participants lived in this complex or in a neighboring one. Although the pilot project formally ended at the end of June, the women were given permission to use the facility again the following year with or without the presence of the college staff.

The facility is a good one for three reasons, in addition to its being free: it is located in the community; it is a homelike and comfortable atmosphere, very informal and largely unintimidating; and, there is space for children and adults both where the two can be separate but not so separate that the children cannot join their mothers when they want to and mothers can also hear their children and know that all is well (or not well!). We had some initial doubts about the presence of Sunday School posters all over the walls because we wondered if some of the people in the community might feel uncomfortable in an atmosphere filled with the presence of a particular religious persuasion. Whereas we have no way of knowing if some people stayed away for that reason, it seems not to have been a problem for those who have come. When people are there, we have our own posters and work which we mount over that which is already there.

2. Time:

The participants decided that we would meet each Thursday morning from 9:15 to 11:15, a time which allows mothers to drop off and pick up young children from nearby schools. Given that their lives seem mostly to be a hectic round of appointments with various authorities, it was agreed by the group that once weekly was enough. The one group within the community who would have liked more time than that were some of the Latin Americans with enough English to see the group as an opportunity to learn English as well as develop relationships with non-Spanish speakers and participate in the other possibilities of the learning process.

3. Child Care:

Because the project was identified as a pilot, child care costs were covered by the college during the first year. It was difficult for the college to justify covering those costs for a second year, and as a result, that has been somewhat of a problem during the second year.

The first year, we were fortunate to have had the services of a bilingual Spanish-speaking brother and sister team hired to look after the nine preschoolers who accompany their mothers to the program. Without the child care service, we thought that there would have been no program since all but three participants have preschoolers and none have sufficient income for alternative childcare arrangements. After Christmas, those two child care personnel moved to another city and one of the mothers volunteered to be responsible for the child care. We were very fortunate to have had this mother since she regarded her role as being more than that of babysitter and took care to provide a variety of learning opportunities for the children.

In that the mothers really need time out from their children (for some, this is a primary reason for coming to the program), we hope that some funding can in future be found. It is not reasonable to expect that women on very low incomes should be expected to come up with the funds themselves. They are having a very difficult time just making ends meet. Nor is it any more reasonable, we feel, to expect them to solve the problem by taking turns with the children. Their own needs seem too great and their wells of energy very low. Later, this may be possible but it seems unlikely as a possibility now.

Bev and I have felt that the problem of child care seemed at times to be more our problem than that of most of the women, although one mother comes much less often because her children do not like to come anymore. As facilitators, we find it very difficult to work in the group when children are crying, fighting, and otherwise disrupting us all. We have raised the issue in the group but most of the others see it largely as our issue and are willing to go along with whatever we propose but have thusfar been unwilling to be in any way responsible for alternative arrangements.

I cannot help but think that this issue is representative of something much larger. I can remember being personally more tolerant of noise levels when my own children were all preschoolers. I remember with equal clarity, however, my desperate need for time out from that situation. In fact, I worked with a small group of other moms to form a parent co-operative child development centre which is still operating successfully fifteen years later. Had I lacked the confidence and the expectation that this was possible, would I too have come to accept a situation I now see as less than healthy for parent or child? The problem Bev and I now face is a question of priorities: is it more important to have people name their own issues and deal with those than it is to see that the children experience this time together as special to them? We sometimes have felt like a broken record in voicing our concerns, and neither of us have felt comfortable with the continuing presence of what is, for us, a problem. In my eyes, we have failed to make progress in this regard.

4. Staffing:

The first year, in addition to the babysitters, the project had had two facilitators: I am a consultant with related experience in this alternative approach to education and Bev is the Consumer Education Project supervisor who was there initially to learn the skills involved in facilitating such an approach with an end to then sharing those skills with other staff persons as appropriate. One facilitator can lead such a group until leadership arises within the group itself, but it is not recommended. Bev has felt the struggle this year. The advantage to having two facilitators is in their ability to reflect together about the learning process; in addition, they bring varied skills and experiences to the process. I suggest that there be two whenever possible in a new project, with one having experience and the other wanting to learn more about this approach.

5. Refreshments:

Coffee is provided for the adult participants and juice for the children. The participants themselves initially brought gifts of baking and fruit for everybody. These were appreciated, but as many of the women struggle with being overweight, it was decided to forego the baking. In addition, one woman seemed to be doing most of it, and although she enjoyed it and took pride in being able to offer that as her gift to the group, some of us felt concern about what it was costing her in time and money. She seemed content with the decision reached by the group to call a halt to the calorific goodies. Now, one mother frequently brings fruit for the children.

6. Funding:

This alternative project was, in its first year, funded through the Consumer Education Project, as is the writing of this text. Funds were spent for staff, refreshments, film and developing, and a small amount for supplies used in the group. In the second year, Bev attends the group on work time but other funding is seldom available for the group.

One rather major problem developed last year when, after the group became a registered non-profit society and opened a bank account, the treasurer disappeared with our bank account, leaving the group with no funds to pay the mother who was looking after the children during group sessions. She was eventually paid but the incident left the group feeling somewhat shaken and rather nervous about having future monies for which to be responsible. Whereas we should have set it up so as to prevent such an action, I also fault the bank. I have never known a society's bank account to be set up with only one signatory. This was one of many lessons for us.

CHAPTER 7

PROCESSES

In the initial draft of this book, I tried to explain the processes of participatory education generally in the first portion of the book, leaving Abbotsfield as an example of those processes in action for the last chapter of the book. In the responses received from readers to this draft, a few people suggested that the chapter on Abbotsfield was sadly different from the others: it lacked sufficient detail about the actual processes followed by the facilitators and was not given the depth and color of the other chapters by including anecdotes. This section, therefore, provides the reader with detail concerning processes, some of which is necessarily redundant but is hopefully more specific and valuable in its contextualization in an actual working group.

The processes are grouped according to what they sought to enable.

I. Creating an Environment

We were using a space which had already quite visibly created an environment of a particular kind: traditional Jesus pictures on all the walls, children's handicraft, small upper rooms each filled totally by one large table surrounded by too many chairs. We wanted to make a space or two into our own when we used the facility and to do so in a way which was functional to our intents. The smell of fresh coffee, occasional music and various flipchart papers on the walls were a beginning.

Central to our being together, from my perspective, was a poster we called "The Principles Poster".

The first two days we met, this poster simply hung on the wall. Then, I noticed one of the women reading it and I explained that these were ideas I believed in. We discussed briefly why I had chosen to hang it and agreed to discuss the items in greater detail as time passed. We discussed them, one or two a week, beginning with those I felt most readily understood and owned by the group: community, participation, and commitment. Occasionally someone else would ask about one and that would be our principle for discussion that day, replacing any I might previously have thought timely.

Our discussion of community brought out the feelings of the women that Abbotsfield was a community in name only and their hope that the group could be a real community where people came to know and support one another. When we talked about commitment, there seemed to be an understanding that we all needed to follow through on commitments we undertook to one another individually and as a group. The notion of praxis was left until after Christmas since I felt that this notion would be better understood once we as a group had shared an experience of reflective action.

The most valuable work with the poster, however, was as a reference point sometimes for the whole group, sometimes just for me. It was a grounding. Our understandings grew and grew as time went on. In the beginning, I was usually the one to refer to our conversation back to the poster when I thought it appropriate to do so but slowly others began to do likewise. Sometimes, I wove the principles into questions which I hoped would help us to better understand our issues, to turn the telling of stories into the posing of problems.

When, for example, we discussed a newsclipping about the possible dangers inherent to eating apples which had been sprayed with many different chemicals, I asked how we might be accountable and how responsible. Given our particular distinction between the two notions, we decided that to be accountable, we would have to either grow our own apples or find untreated ones, and in that way, account for our own health and that of our children. To be responsible, however, was different: we decided to write a letter of complaint to the authorities whose mandate was food regulation.

Also on the wall was the on-going log of what we did and the decisions we made from meeting to meeting. The log was written at the close of each meeting and each person would say what she wanted written there. Since the moms were generally snowsuiting their children by this time, Bev or I generally did the actual writing with everyone contributing what they wanted said. In the odd event I did not understand what someone had said, I would ask, "Do you mean . . . ?" and, if they said yes, would write the clarified version of their idea. I preferred to stick to their words wherever possible.

Part of creating an environment was greeting people as they arrived, helping the children get comfortable and making a point of drawing in newcomers, not just expecting them to fit into whatever we were doing at the time.

Another aspect of the environment was the ever-present camera which sat on the table for anyone who wanted to take a picture to do so. If a newcomer came, we explained the practice, inviting her to take whatever pictures she "saw" and asking if she minded being in other peoples' pictures. We explained that the pictures were for the use of the group only and that if we intended to use them for any other purpose,

people would be asked for their permission. One woman originally said she minded but changed her mind soon into the meeting. When these were developed, they would be placed upon the table as people arrived. We were often able to get two-for-the-price-of-one developing and when that was the case, people took home a copy of the picture or pictures they wanted. The others, we then made into posters which we hung in the meeting rooms as colorful records of our times together. They served also to let newcomers know more about us too. Eventually, the pictures were put into a photo album and many were used to make a photostory about the group at the end of the year. In hindsight, I have one concern about the camera practice, as valuable as it was. Some of the women in this community had been in trouble with the law and I fear that a newcomer might have no reason to trust our commitment to keep the pictures within the group itself. Although the women who stayed with us obviously did not have a problem with the practice, I wonder if anyone failed to return for fear of being recognized by someone not present that day . . .

The creating of an environment was an on-going task requiring thoughtfulness.

II. Connecting and Focusing

It is my belief that making changes in our lives is ever so much easier from within a sense of being in community with others. The women's sentiments throughout the year confirmed this belief. A community of people are aware of their connectedness to each other and out of that are empowered to move in particular directions of their own choosing.

Most of us saw one another only once a week, and in the intervening seven days, many things happened to the women of Abbotsfield: husbands left home or showed up after long absences, social workers removed children from their homes, conflicts erupted with the landlord or with some other bureaucrat exerting power over their lives, children got into trouble, women got pregnant and aborted. As facilitators, we felt a strong need to meet each person anew as we came together, and indeed there were also new people who came from time to time. So, each week, the question was asked of everyone, "Why are you here **today**?" In answer to this question, people said "to get away from the house", "because I like this group of women", "like I tell my husband, it's my parenting group", "because I want to learn", "because I look forward to this day", "because I want to meet other women".

One woman just hated the question and sometimes refused to answer it. She found no meaning in it. Interestingly, that same woman, after six months of the group's not asking one another the question this past year, has said that the question needs to be asked. She feels the group has lacked focus this year and has been bogged down. Structures that formerly made no sense to her, she now understands as valuable.

I am fascinated that in a whole year, no one ever answered "because I want to learn how to budget my money", although that was identified by a few members as an activity they would like to pursue. In that the Consumer Education Project in the college had for years identified budgeting as one of the primary needs in such communities, and, in that "Money and Us" was the banner under which we began the project in Abbotsfield, we were struck with the inappropriateness of our middle-class educator understandings when it came to the reality of these women's lives. Whatever they had responded to in coming to our project, it was not the title we had given it. For me, this

points to my frequent experience in continuing education programs that many adult learners participate in programs for reasons different than those assumed by the instructors. **Would we not do well to go beyond "course delivery" modes of understanding our work and try to better understand what it means for adult learners to *participate* in formal learning opportunities?**

With regard, once again, to the question we began with asking (why are you here today?), the reader may wonder why the practice was dropped during the second year. Bev tells me she sensed that we as facilitators seemed to have a greater need for structure than did the group, an observation with which I would concur. She decided not to impose these structures and to see what happened. She, like the woman mentioned previously, experienced the group as "spinning its wheels" for the better part of the year. I would not, however, say that the group had not made progress. I was surprised to see the detail with which they had identified the health issues in their lives, for example. I also feel that they have come to realize as a group that there is a usefulness to structure and that future structures will be placed around group activities, not because the facilitator wants them, but because more people within the group as a whole see them as valuable.

What seems to be happening a year later is that a few members of the group have seen clearly the choice between having a support group only and having a group in which learning and action can move them beyond their daily struggles. Whereas they are willing now to consider the latter, it must be in very small steps for the fear is enormous. It is clear to Bev and me that we were unrealistic in our expectations as to the time and work it would take to reach this awareness.

III. Working Towards an Experience of Community

I do not know how to impress upon the reader the difference between this group and any other group of people I had worked with prior to it. I always consciously embark on community-building in a new group, but little did I know at the outset of this one what a monumental task we were undertaking.

Bev and I initially suffered what I can only call culture shock at the abuse and deprivation so common to so many of these women's lives. We spent hours, the two of us, together debriefing what we had heard, trying to understand it and trying to come up with a supportive response which might do more than console.

Within the limits of our own time, we tried to get to know the participants as individuals. I visited with the Latin American women and a couple of the others. Bev practically adopted, for the first few months, one woman who had no "safety nets" whatsoever, a woman who felt isolated. This came to be more of a commitment than Bev could continue at the same intensity, so, gradually, she limited more closely the time she was spending with her, but by then, others had picked up a commitment to this woman and now, she has many strong connections within the group.

It was not just Bev and I who initially supported women during the week. Many of the other women were very supportive of and concerned about one another. They helped each other out in whatever ways they could. In the Abbotsfield area, this kind of mutual aid seemed very uncommon. With the exception of two women who knew each other in the group, no one the first year knew any of their immediate neighbors.

The women described to us the closed doors, closed curtains and fights they heard through their thin walls. They were frustrated, some of them, with having reached out in their own loneliness to make contact with others and having had little or no success.

As facilitators, we observed the fear, the lack of self-confidence and sometimes the false bravado, and we consciously endeavored to affirm every member of the group at every opportunity. (They also affirmed us in goodly measure!) The group did an exercise one morning wherein we listed all the positive adjectives we could think of about each person. We took turns with participants writing these up on flipchart paper and all of us were surprised to learn how others saw us.

Part of building a community was the decision to respond to one another's immediate practical needs before we proceeded with our plans for the day. One woman, for example, looked very sad one day and told us how difficult her life was without a washing machine.

This led to another woman's washing machine story. When this second woman's washing machine had broken down, the repairman told her it could not be fixed but that for the $125 allowance welfare gives for repairs, he could give her a washer and dryer with the repair visit included in the price. The dryer would be guaranteed for one year. Having not had a dryer, she was delighted and called welfare to give them the good news. Sorry, they said, welfare policy covers neither automatic washers nor dryers but they would pay the $45 for the repairman's visit and buy her a $462 wringer washing machine instead. (A recent phone call on my part to welfare authorities cited repair costs up to $125 would be paid. When old machines are beyond repair, new wringer washing machines are provided from government warehouses at a reduced cost of $246 each.)

In the case of the Spanish-speaking woman who had the current problem, I was unsure of how to proceed and suggested that we call the AID line (Advice, Information and Direction). I was surprised that people were unfamiliar with this number in that it can refer a person in need, to any given service in the city. (The women in Abbotsfield normally seem to know a lot more of the ins and outs of making the system work for them than I do, thus my surprise.) The English-speaking woman who had shared her washing machine story with us offered to make the call on behalf of the Spanish-speaking woman who was concerned that her English was not up to the task.

The woman who answered the AID line was very helpful. When told the person in need did not speak much English, she advised her to get an advocate to make the request and gave us three possibilities to call. She said that if the request is not made properly, a person does not get the help even if entitled to it. The woman was given the number of an agency which had Spanish-speaking staff who would advocate on her behalf at no charge to her.

We hope she got her washing machine but we do not know because she did not return to the group and no one was able to discover why. I suspect that after missing several meetings due to sick children, she did not feel comfortable coming back after having been only once, but I cannot minimize the feelings most of the immigrant women had about the group's efforts to include them, poor English and all. They often felt like they were depriving the English-speaking members of the group from realizing their own needs in the group.

One other planned exercise gave us a great deal of insight into the members of our new community. We spent the better part of one morning drawing pictures of our lives which we then talked about that morning and the following week. One of the Latin American women did not want to draw. She had severe problems with her sight and said she would make a mess. We said that was okay and asked if she would like to tell us something about her life. She decided that her English was a bigger problem than her vision and laughingly decided to do a picture after all.

The picture preceding shows two of our members expanding on what they had drawn. We discovered them both to be born actresses and thoroughly enjoyed their antics, many of us because we could really identify with what they were saying. (In this case, they were imitating their children!)

The pictures told about our families, our past and present, and our feelings about life. In them we saw stress and joy, laughter and tears, color and lack of it. We saw in them that we had more in common than we had realized. They were a way, too, of focusing our attention upon one another, *one at a time,* no easy feat in a group where so many want to talk all at once. When it was one person's turn, most people recognized her right to speak and be listened to. It was an especially valuable exercise for the Spanish speakers who so seldom were able to "get the floor" at our meetings, in spite of the efforts a few of us made to be considerate of their needs.

Creating community means also sharing our gifts, whatever they be. Iris offered to teach us to make chocolates, Bev to sew a quilt, Gail to make chapattis and fill out income tax forms, Belinda to lead us in a feelings exercise she had learned in another group. This sharing came out of an exercise wherein we each took home an index card and on one side wrote what we wanted to learn in the group and on the other, what we would be willing to teach the others. This exercise was done at the suggestion of one of the members. In hindsight, I have one regret. Whereas I was delighted that the group

was opting to follow through on the suggestions of its members, I was then unaware of the presence in the group of at least one woman who was either illiterate or semi-literate. She was a new member to the group and did not come back after that day. It is quite possible that her discomfort with the card-writing could be why.

I am increasingly convinced that such a group requires the facilitators and members alike to take a personal interest in each person who comes, to the extent of there being contact made with each person by someone in the group during each week. It is a largely middle-class custom to attend group classes and workshops in which you neither have nor expect other connections with participants therein. Those who do not have that custom find it suspect; they wonder what's "in it" for the leaders if group meetings are the only time they are seen in a community.

This is a question at least two facilitators in the Consumer Education Project have been asking themselves. One staff member asks if we are not "riding the backs of the poor" when we accept pay to do this kind of work. In many cases, this may be exactly what professionals are doing. I have found it a valuable ethical question to ask myself and the way I answer it lies in naming to what degree I experience community with those with whom I work. To the degree I experience myself as being in community with others and genuinely interested in supporting them (and myself) in trying to gain greater control over our collective lives, to that degree I feel justified in doing the work for pay. If, however, I experience myself as an outsider doing something *for* rather than *with* a group of people, I suspect I am fooling myself. It has been my experience that *doing for* and *doing to* are too easily confused, one with the other, and that *doing with* feels more like what I am called to do. I would be interested in hearing how other educators deal with this question for themselves.

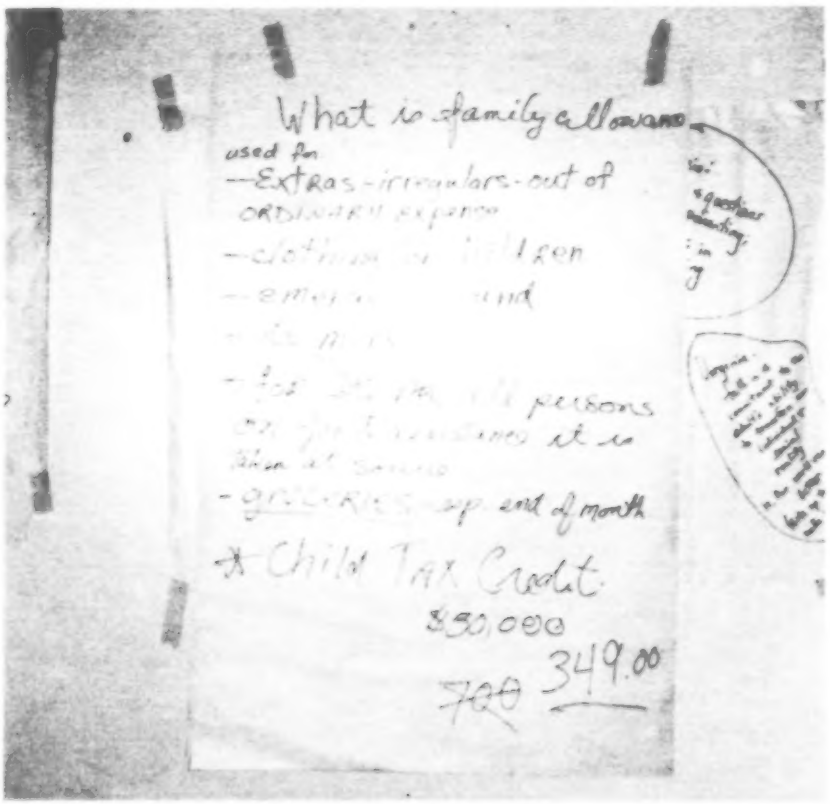
IV. Responding to the Moment

So instrumental and task-oriented have most educational systems become that it was not always easy for me to live in the moments of the group as they presented themselves.

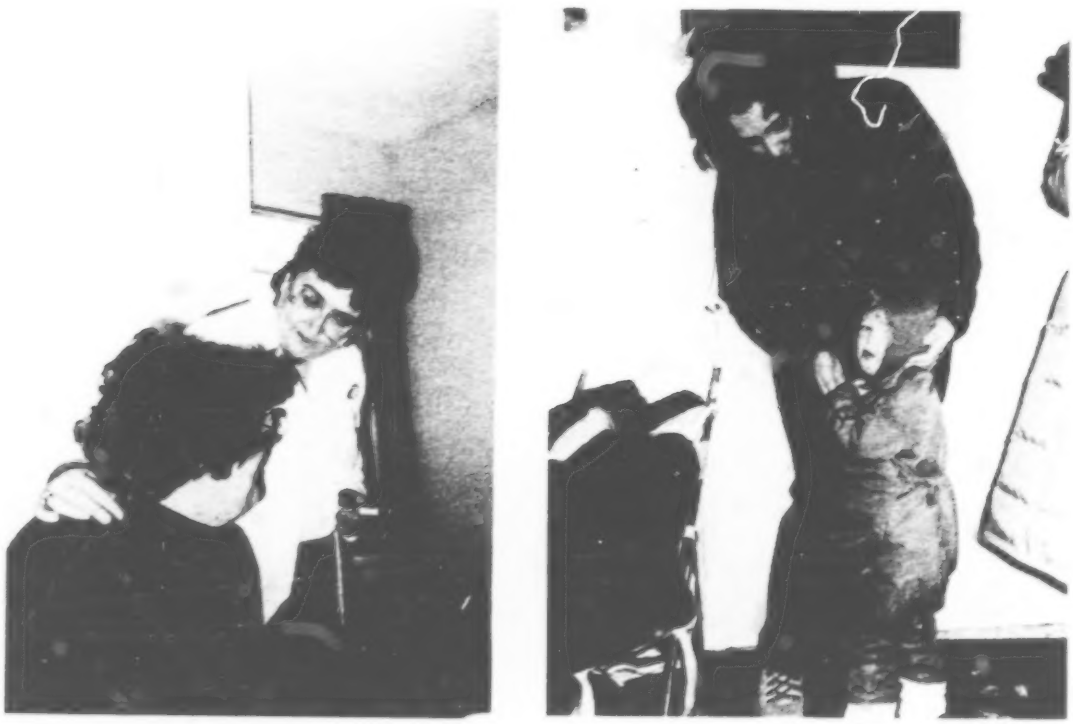
What, for example, were we to make of a little girl knocking at the door one cold winter morning saying she was hungry? Was she an interlude or did she embody the reason we were there? There was no question as to offering her what we had and then seeing that she got safely home. The question was rather one of understanding the meaning of this incident and many like it.

I left the group one morning to find out where home was for another small child who was spotted crying outside the window. We eventually found Grandmother, an older woman who spoke Slavee and almost no English. Upon delivering her grandson home, I enjoyed an unusual conversation with this woman. She addressed me in Slavee with gestures, and although I do not speak the language, I thought I recognized it and tried out my one and only Slavee phrase by pointing to myself as I said the Slavee equivalent of "teacher" (literally, paper house man). Her eyes lit up and through gestures, she learned that I had worked in the North and was currently working in her community, and I learned that she was from Assumption and hated living in the city but was looking after her grandchildren so her daughter could work. She wanted to go home but had empty pockets. She was lonely. I told her about the group, wondering how on earth we could be present to her, a woman worlds apart from us not only in language. I left her place feeling like there was something I ought to be seeing and was not.

In addition to responding to such unexpected events outside our circle, we responded as best we could to events as they occurred for our members, the washing machine story being one such example. Some members of the group also brought in newspaper clippings or items from the TV or radio news or from the school newsletter. One such instance was the announcement that the federal government was going to de-index the family allowance payments. Most of us did not know what that meant. Gail led us through a very interesting discussion wherein we not only learned what that meant, but identified what the family allowance payments meant to us.


What is family allowance
used for
-Extras - irregulars - out of
ordinary expense
-
-
-

V. Caring for One Another



As has been mentioned already, as facilitators, we spent a great deal of our time just listening to the women's rage, hurt and frustration. The stories people told us were so overwhelming in their tragedy that we could not choose to be task-oriented in the face of them. To have done so would have seemed, I believe, uncaring to all concerned. And sometimes, the stories themselves were not so powerful but the women telling them were insistent almost to a compulsion that they had to be told. At best, we could point out to the group that, as a group, we were choosing sometimes to listen to each other rather than to do what we had said we were going to do.

Such listening was one way of caring. In the case of intercultural communication, that listening took on a very active form. Some of the regulars in the group were very considerate of the Spanish-speaking women's need for people to speak one-at-a-time, somewhat slowly and simply. Gail was frequently pressed into service as an interpreter when the going got rough. Eventually we lost all our Latin American participants, some to E.S.L. and job-training programs, some to work. I know, however, that they found it difficult to be in the group. They were embarrassed by their lack of English comprehension and felt guilty about our repeated attention to their needs. One woman said she always had a headache when she came to the group. This is another area in

which I feel there must be a lot more potential benefit for all concerned than we were able to create. I would like to hear about other groups where English-speaking and non-English-speaking people worked together to their mutual benefit.

Between group meetings, caring is often evidenced in very tangible ways. Gail, as a fluent speaker of Spanish, was able to assist several of the Spanish speakers in their dealings with bureaucracies. Nicoletta, with a lot of time on her hands, was very faithful in phoning those who had been absent to let them know they were missed. Each of us gave out of the knowledge and skills which were ours to support one another in getting through another day, another week.

In reaching out to one another, we learned a lot. Gail Campos wrote a very beautiful poem for our photostory which speaks of the plight of the immigrant woman and perhaps of our frustration in wanting to be present to these women but often feeling we fell short of the mark:

Que haces aqui, señora?
(What are you doing here, lady?)

What are you doing here, lady,
Polishing the floors of this building?
Is this what you came here for?

Back home, I was a teacher, I worked in a hospital,
I was a doctor, a mother, a clerk.
Here, I'm an immigrant woman.
I clean the toilets and run the sewing machines,
I wash the sheets in the hotels.

What are you doing here, lady,
Polishing the floors of this building?
Is this what you came here for?

My husband can't find work, the kids need winter boots,
I studied English for a few months,
A friend found me this job.

The war in my country has gone on for so long,
The refugee camps are growing, the army is everywhere.
I had a house back home, a garden, family, friends.

I wanted to keep studying, but there was no money,
They told me I knew enough English to get a job.

Back home, I was a teacher, I worked in a hospital,
I was a doctor, a mother, a clerk.

What am I doing here, lady?
Is this what I came here for?

VI. Reaching Into and Beyond Ourselves

Sometimes, we reached into the community for resource people. Sometimes, they reached out to our group as a resource. One case of the latter involved Catalyst Theatre which had been contracted by Social Services to put together a participatory theatre performance for and about single moms on welfare. The director knew I was working with a group and asked if she might talk with us as she did her research.

Little did we know when we said yes what a wonderful opportunity that would be for us. Jane Heather is an actress by vocation and a sensitive, caring, down-to-earth and very talented group facilitator. We were a small group the morning she came, five in total, and one of us chose to watch rather than actively participate as Jane led us through a sculpting exercise.

The world in which we find ourselves

The world as we would like to make it for ourselves

As a single parent, I found this exercise very moving. Unlike previous groups in which I had done sculpting exercises, groups in which people wanted to discuss and plan the sculpture before doing it, this small group of four simply began to move. We had been asked "How does it feel to be a single mother?" We responded as though automatically, by turning away from the centre of our group. Our bodies spoke of needing protection, of determination, of despair. Jane had each of us step outside the sculpture, walk around it, and study it. Then, she asked, "How would you like it to feel?" Again, without speaking, we turned toward one another and linked ourselves together forming a solid front which both enabled us to stand together against that part of the world which threatened us and also nurtured those within and near our human chain.

The woman making sculptures were not the only ones to feel their power. One mother's small son began to cry in terror as he wandered into the room at the moment we built our first sculpture. He stopped crying as we did the second. I think Jane's work with us that morning left a strong statement with us. We discovered for ourselves the power of solidarity, an idea quite outside the experience of most of us.

Another morning, we invited in a welfare mom who has been very adept at surviving the welfare system. She shared with the group not only the loopholes she had discovered through the years but also her philosophy: "Each morning I get up and smile, no matter what." We had great respect for her determination that neither she nor her two daughters would let themselves be driven further down by their circumstances.

One morning which turned out very differently than the way we had expected was the morning we set out to inform a powerful government appointee as to the lived worlds of the women whose interest she was supposedly appointed to represent. We made the naive assumption that she would want to learn from our participants what life was like for them. The group's impression was that she was there to publicize her role and look good but definitely not to learn. For the emotions this encounter engendered in the group, the reader is referred to the chapter entitled "In Our Own Words".

VII. Celebrating Our Community

On special occasions, we planned parties to include those family members who were not with us normally. Mostly, these were for fun, and it is very important for a group like this to create fun-times together. Life gets pretty heavy at times, and it was good to laugh, to sing, and to eat together with one another and with our children. The children especially enjoyed Leo Campos's guitar playing and lively songs in English and Spanish.

In the second half of the year, the group chose to have some of our regular mornings revolve around activities with the children. Here is what one mother wrote about Valentine's Day for our photostory:

> Our Valentine's Day party would best be described by all as "having a good time". The happy smiles abounded and a general silliness displayed by one and all regardless of age, came about as balloons were blown up and jokes and stories were shared. Paper crafts and pictures were made by children as they eagerly awaited one of the highlights of our party, the "Care Bear" cake made and brought by our talented member, Iris McNeil. Once again could be felt that feeling of unity as a group. We were again as one. What a nice and comfortable feeling."

At the beginning of the year, there was a lot of noise and unhappiness amongst the children in a new situation. As they came to know one another, they had many fun moments, two of which are seen as follows:

We wanted to take the spirit of celebration into the larger community, partly to give others the sense of fun and fellowship and possibility which we had come to enjoy and partly as a way of letting people know we were here and open to new participants. We talked about having a spring barbecue in the open area of the housing development. We would have hotdogs, pop and ice cream to eat, balloons for the children and clowns. Alas, none of us had the energy or time to get that idea off the ground. It was probably a wise decision, at that point, not to try, for it is very easy for small groups to get burned out by taking on more than the members are able to handle.

VIII. Reflection

Reflection I saw as a very important aspect of our work together as a group. If we were to move beyond our circumstances, we needed to do more than give voice to them. We needed to understand how they came to be and how they made us who we are.

I can think of three tools which were of primary help to us in learning to be more reflective. One was the daily collective journal in which we asked ourselves, "What happened here today?" Another was the photostory which, as a culminating activity for the first year, helped us to look back over our year as recorded in photo and on numerous pieces of flipchart paper. As we looked back, we sifted, sorted and made choices about which stories we wanted to include. We discussed the happenings in our group yet again.

A third tool was the process of checking out with people again and again whether the plans we had as a group for future meetings were still consistent with where people were at in their lives at any given moment. Sometimes we made changes in advance, sometimes at the last moment. Although people had wanted, for example, a session on filling out income tax forms, no one brought forms on the morning designated, so

it was decided to talk that morning and a couple of arrangements were made for individual help later.

The most powerful tool in the reflective process is the question. I was forever asking questions, not only for information and clarification, but questions which I hoped would cause us all to dig a little deeper in our understanding, or questions which would mirror back to the group or to an individual what they were saying from a different perspective. I also asked a lot of "What if . . . ?" questions.

CHAPTER 8

IN OUR OWN WORDS

Throughout this text, the reader has been offered my perspective and my stories. Indeed, that has been my intent in this text, to present to other educators one "window" on the experience of working with participatory education. The intent of this particular chapter is to extend that personal perspective with the inclusion of the creative voice of other participants in the Abbotsfield project. The first stories in this chapter are taken from the photostory which the participants of the Abbotsfield Women's Project prepared at the end of the first year. The section entitled "Excerpts from a Transcript" is a result of the suggestion of one of the readers of the first draft of this text. He suggested that I take a tape recorder to a meeting with the creators of the photostory and tape their voiced comments about the pictures and replace the written stories which were in the photostory with sections of the transcript from this tape. I taped such a meeting and am very glad I did, for their spoken words conveyed with more force the lived experience of their lives than did the written stories. I invite the reader to compare the kinds of learning present for us in the written stories which follow, to the learning potential in the oral stories which appear in the transcript section.

In this type of educational work, I believe it is significant to examine the difference between the spoken and the written word. In mainstream society, we have become very dependent on the permanence and ready availability of the written word, and so may not realize how important it can be to *speak* our word. That the spoken voice can be at times more than the written voice came across to me very clearly in a recent experience I had of putting my own ideas to voice.

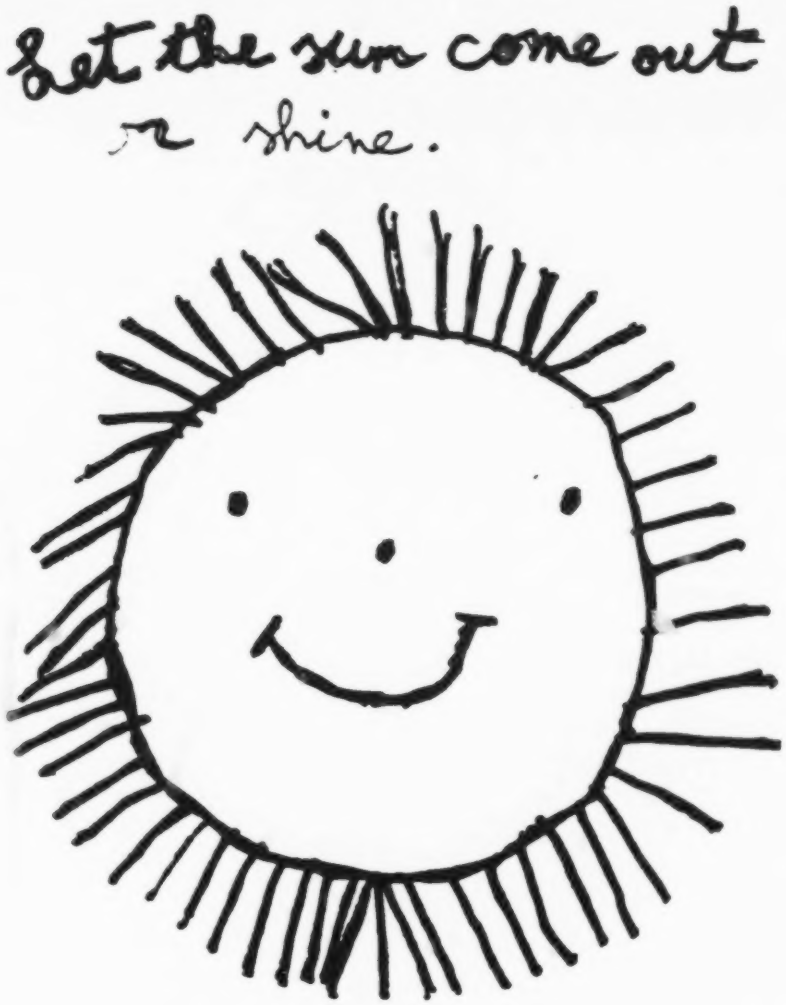
I was invited to make an oral presentation at a national task force on immigration and mental health. After much thought both as to what I wanted to say and to what I surmised that other presenters would say, I decided not to do the propositional presentation I had planned but rather to trust that other presenters would cover that territory for me, leaving me to risk something different. I told a story. The story concerned an adult learner I had once taught who, as a result of seeing absolutely no hope in continuing his life, committed suicide. I described the complexity of events leading up to this decision and then made the point that as professionals we ought not to see ourselves as "fixers" of persons who are somehow dysfunctional or incomplete but rather to see ourselves as mutual members of a community, all of whom have different skills and gifts to share with one another. I spent some time thinking about the writing of my presentation and then typed it up fairly quickly and arrived at the hearing simply hoping that what I was to say would be of value to those listening.

I was greatly surprised when I actually **told** my story to the assemblage of people gathered there. In writing it, I had remembered what had happened and felt I had learned from those events. In **speaking** it, the events were recreated for me in a form closer to their original fullness. The emotion came back and I had a very difficult time controlling my voice. I wanted to weep and had to play little mind games with myself to continue speaking. The problem was the man's eyes; they appeared before me as they had the last afternoon I saw him alive, when he waited behind to say, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Virginia", though I did not understand at the time why he was saying this to me. I was quite bewildered and a little frightened that an event I thought I had dealt with years

ago still had so much power for me. Writing the words of that story was not the same experience as saying them. Saying them to myself was not the same as saying them to someone else whose understanding of them I sought. So, it is my hope that in reading the words which have been spoken as well as those written by other participants in the Abbotsfield project, the reader will have an added opportunity for depth in coming to better understand how my own perspective has taken shape as it has.

My sincere appreciation goes to the women of Abbotsfield who have so generously given me permission to use their words in all the various forms in which they came. In spite of their permission to use their names in the transcript as well as in the excerpts from the photostory, I was afraid to do so with the transcript and have not done so. Perhaps I have acquired a goodly dose of the fear these women live with daily as to what authority can do to them if they cross the line by telling it as they see it.

I. The Cover of the Photostory as Designed by Nicoletta Fillipis



II. We Are Survivors

"We are survivors. Many of us have suffered abuse as children and/or adults. All of us feel a lot of anger about government, medical, legal and educational systems which do not acknowledge us as persons or hear our voices or even acknowledge our rights by law. We have shared our stories about physical and sexual abuse, mental cruelty and poverty. We have felt alone and cut off from others; it's hard to have friends when you're shut off from the world. We've been told we are worthless and we have believed it. We are tired of not being believed by social workers when we beg for our most basic needs, needs for which the policies say we are entitled to money. Half the time we're not even aware of our rights and that's one of the reasons it's so important for women to come together."

". . . Although we live in one of the poorest areas of the city, there is no lunch program at the school. We are fearful often for our safety and our children's safety. In this group we have learned that we can help each other, no matter what."

– the above are excerpts from the collectively produced introduction to the photostory of the Abbotsfield Women's Project, 1986.

III. As Individuals We Come

The following excerpts are also taken from the photostory and are reprinted exactly as individuals gave them to us, with the exception that one woman asked another woman to help with hers.

"They say the best things in life are free. I find that's true: the pleasure of a child's smile, a cool breeze, a rainbow, the knowing look of a friend, but with all of life's pleasures, especially if you are a Mom alone, it's easy to forget those pleasant things. I have found through the kinship I've lived in this group that it often brings all of the best things back into focus. I think it's a pity that more women do not come together to share, for I feel that the time they could share, can be one of life's sweet pleasures, or should I say 'treasures'."

– Belinda Blair

"I like this group because I have made new friends with all of the women who come here and with their children.

"I will miss this group a lot over the summer, but hope that in September we will meet again. I hope we will meet on Wednesday morning. I have been accepted into a class that meets on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

"I enjoyed the Christmas party a lot. I want the group to continue again in September."

– Nicoletta Fillipis

"It's tough being five! It's tough when your own mother won't listen to you, won't believe you. Things were happening like my mother's boyfriends were playing with me sexually. I would tell her and the only thing she would do is hit me. It's pretty scary at night not knowing when it would start again. I started not telling anyone.

"This group has helped me to believe in women. For twenty years or more, I didn't have any trust at all in women. In the last six weeks, it's been the strongest ever."

– Name Withheld

"She had been walking and walking. She had passed the mountains, passed the deserts, and was now in the middle of this damn forest. She took off her backpack and looked again at the contents. So much of what she carried with her was dusty and ragged. She shook out the cloths one by one, the cloths of compassion, justice, courage, and hope. Some of them were almost worn through, so many times had she donned one or the other as she went through her life. And now she was tired, so tired and all the bright cloths she once carried so proudly were worn and faded. Perhaps, this is how it ends, she thought; we just wear out and fall apart. But there, sewn expertly into the lining by an old woman was a new cloth. The old woman had told her to save this last piece of cloth for a time when everything else was used and it looked like there was no hope. This cloth was so strong, so vivid, that nothing could fade it or rip it, but also so fine that one had to be ready to wrap oneself in it and wear it forever, because it was a cloth that called out to be worn.

"It was time to take out this cloth. Her wanderings had taken her so far, and had cost her dearly. At each place she had stopped along the way, she had left something behind, had given away another piece of her soul and she now felt empty and alone. She took her scissors and cut away at the lining of her backpack. A rainbow of colors flashed in the sun and the cloth took on its own life. It was heavy; it was light. It was suffocating; it was liberating. It wove itself around the forest and thundered and sang and wept all at once. She looked around her and wondered if she would be able to carry on her shoulders such a cloth. Could one woman carry such a burden: the tears, the hopes, the struggles caught up in that cloth? And as she asked the question, a thousand hands stretched out and a thousand feet began to walk with her, and together they took up the cloth of sisterhood."

– Gail Campos

IV. We Look to Our Individual Futures

The following three excerpts come from the last section of the photostory.

"I see the future with optimism, for both my children and myself. I feel no matter what we have to face we can do it. Some of my personal dreams are to learn to drive a car and someday to be self-sufficient in supporting my children. For my children, I want them to grow up to be whole, good and self-reliant adults."

– Belinda Blair

"My dreams are to meet Prince William in person someday because I like Prince William a lot and I care about Prince William."

– Nicoletta Fillipis

"I am feeling excited and in anticipation of what is to unfold for me! I have a sense that I will continue to experience my world more richly and the people in it with more sensitivity and joy."

– Bev Downing

V. Excerpts from a Transcript: The Photostory Ten Months Later

In asking to meet with the group this year to discuss the photostory, it was my hope that I would come to better understand the participants' experience of the events recorded in the photostory. Some readers felt, and I agreed, that the texts which had been written did not do the same justice to the experiences of the group as oral tellings might. In the usual process of this group meeting together, other stories emerged along with the old ones we were recreating. The reader will find samples of both herein. The names of all persons speaking in this transcript except myself have been changed for their protection.

The reader is forewarned that the experience of reading what follows will likely be at times confusing and therefore somewhat frustrating, as well as enlightening. It will be tempting to attribute such confusion to the fact that the excerpts are, of course, only excerpts and one may think that if only it was known what came before and after, it would not be so hard to follow. Alas, I doubt if that is often the case.

Those who helped with the final editing were uncomfortable with the confusion, and that made me realize that I had not been clear about all of the reasons for including some segments of the transcript.

Whereas the segments are indeed truer in their portrayal of the women's experience than are written stories, they are also truer in making accessible to the reader something of the struggle Bev and I faced daily in our attempts to "follow" what was going on in group discussions. The reader is referred particularly to the third segment: "Gucci Suits and Kidney Stones". In this conversation, we see shifts of topic, the efforts of various people to get back "on topic", and monologues whose thread of continuity becomes apparent only at the end thereof, if at all. I include these for their important

value in enabling the reader to catch a brief glimpse of what was one of our greatest frustrations in doing this work. It is a constant question for us as to the meaning of all these events. What does it mean to be "on topic"? Whose topic? Why?

That particular story, along with many others we heard, also illustrates the different worlds of the poor and those who have power over them. It would be easy to condemn the visitor described for her insensitivity, but to do so would be to miss the well-intended consideration which, from her perspective, led up to the particulars of that visit. It would also miss the fact that, unlike others with power, she actually came and listened as best she knew how. Others have managed to avoid, with reams of procedural hassles and delays, the group's invitations to come.

The question to ask ourselves, perhaps, is not how to get better people into positions of power over the poor, since the likelihood of that happening is slight. We might instead take the view that the poor and those in power over them are like two different cultures with all that implies: different language, different understandings of how the world is, different values and ways of being in the world, and on and on. Then we might take the additional step of saying, "O.K. These two cultures occupy some common space and have to better work out what it means to do that, since the current situation is not satisfying to everyone." Such a position on our part as educators would mean we did not condemn people according to which group they belonged. Adult educators usually take one of two positions: 1. The poor are oppressed and the powerful are wrong, or, 2. The poor have to learn how to adjust better to the world the way it is. If they learn how to read and write and speak properly and behave properly, their lives will be better. Either of these positions alienates those who take the other one. An alternative is an intercultural dialogue wherein two parties sit down together first to genuinely try to understand who the other is and why, and then, to begin to identify and confront issues of justice in working out what it means to share a world.

I do not believe that the lives of anyone will be substantially changed for the better unless we can learn to love and respect **all** persons while refusing to accept the injustices and ignorance manifested by them, be they rich or poor.

A. "The Word and the Way"

Linda: "What I got in here is that **society is really kind of two-faced**, things are expected, things are said but . . ., the way society really works is the opposite."

B. Television vs. Reality

(We were discussing the title of the photostory, the title having been given to us by Nicoletta who had drawn the sun. The original title was "Let the sun come out, or shine." Laura has joined the group this year and was unaware of the background to our choosing of the title.)

Laura: "'Let the Sun Shine' should be the title."

Linda: "We talked about 'Let the sun come out *and* shine' but who knows if it's going to come out and shine? It can come out but does it necessarily shine, like on our lives in general, like the sun can be out there, but when you're waddled down in diapers, kids, . . . When it came to this decision, we decided that the sun does come out a lot, but

does it really shine on us? Like are we showered with all of life's good graces everyday? In other words, does Dynasty appear in our living room in real life?"

Laura: "In our house, it's more like Peyton Place."

(group laughs)

Linda: "Well, I'm not going to walk to my closet and find fur coats. And my children don't miraculously come in spotless and in good clothes and the chauffeur isn't going to say 'madame', and when I get back from Safeway some woman isn't going to say 'madame, your supper is cooked.' No, I'm going to get 'Is supper ready?' 'I want cheese.' 'I want candy!'"

C. Gucci Suits and Kidney Stones

(We were discussing how common it is in our society to want to correct the words of others without pausing to ask if we really understand what is meant by them. Sonia raised the story of the visit of a government official concerned with the interests of women. Her visit to the group was written up very subtly in the photostory but the real story of that visit, the women had been hesitant to write). The only hint of the following story lay in the first line of the photostory which read "Emotions ran high when —— was our guest speaker."

Sonia: (imitating the visiting official's reaction to the first line of the photostory in question, which read: "On the day ——— came to call, emotions ran high.") "'That could be interpreted in a negative way.'" (said in an aristocratic tone. Everyone roars with laughter.) "'I would like to suggest that it read . . .'— whatever . . . . she wrote back and it was like a press release! It read '——— met with . . .'" (more knowing laughter)

Linda: "Oh, those wacko women out in Abbotsfield. I wrote that one . . ."

(Sonia and Abbie reassured her it was well done. I suggested including their oral response to this woman's visit in this text and Linda responded:)

Linda: "But we'll have to have insurance for a lawyer . . ."

Virginia: "There is nothing libelous in that. You were subtle to the nth degree."

Linda: "And that was very difficult to write. If I really wrote what happened here (more laughter), we would never have got funding."

Virginia: "What really happened that morning?"

Linda: "I felt sorry for her because emotions ran so high."

Abbie: "I didn't feel sorry for her at all. She deserved it. Coming here in her Gucci suit and . . ."

Linda: "and late. Having the cab prearranged. Not only did she get here late but she had the cab arranged to come early (to pick her up) and she cut her time."

Virginia: "What I find hard to believe is that when she did get here, she couldn't believe this is where we were meeting, so she kept driving around looking for another address with the same number on it."

Linda: "You know, people do meet in houses! We don't have big highrises." (sarcastic remarks follow by several people suggesting local "highrise" — three-storey — spots which may have seemed more acceptable to her)

Virginia: "So, how did you feel in that meeting?"

Linda: "Well, she was really out of her element. She could have come more prepared considering she is a person who's dealt with the press, been in politics and that."

Virginia: "How could she have prepared herself more?"

Linda: "Well, she seemed to have all kinds of stuff, she had a little briefcase with her . . . she should have done her homework before she came here. What did she expect? If she'd done her homework, she'd have known what to expect in this area of town. Did you get the Abbotsfield newsletter? Do you know what it has on the back? Priorities for Abbotsfield? I'll have to bring the school thing. There is nothing on the back page. Because there is nothing. There is no money in that school and now they've cut us down; we've even less than nothing."

(Author's note: The previous exchange is a good example of the very frequent shift of topic facilitators were faced with in every conversation we had at Abbotsfield. It seemed impossible to maintain any theme through a conversation for more than two minutes, if that. I did not feel at liberty to redirect the conversation but rather chose sometimes to reintroduce the subject a bit later or to simply point out to the group what I saw happening. Only rarely did one of the group members take responsibility for coming back to the subject of discussion, which is what happened here).

Laura: "The kids have had a marathon to raise money."

Linda: "She should have checked out what was happening here before she came here. She was totally unprepared."

Abbie: "If you're going to go and talk to someone in the inner city, Virginia, are you going to go in your best silk scarf? I mean get off it lady."

Virginia: "Did you tell her?"

Abbie: "I gave her a few choice comments about what I thought."

Linda: "That's where the emotions ran high."

Virginia: "Abbie, what did you tell her?"

Abbie: "I don't remember what I told her. First of all, she was offensive when she walked in. I don't go and visit anybody looking like that. Even if one could afford to, why would you do it if someone told you you were going to go and talk to . . . "

Linda: "poor people."

Abbie: " . . . OK? If you want to go talk to people at the Petroleum Club you dress like that."

Virginia: "So, her overdressing was offensive to people who couldn't afford to . . . "

Linda: "Well, she was here to talk about our plight!!!? She was here to talk about how downtrodden we were. She was here to hear about our problems."

Virginia: "Was she? Did she think that?"

Abbie: "She's been downtrodden. She's worked as a waitress while she worked her way through school."

Linda: "And she wore hand-me-downs and came from a big family."

Abbie: "Oh, go to hell woman . . . we've all worked as waitresses."

Linda: "And she did chores . . . (everyone is talking at the same time). Yes, everybody, I've cooked and I changed dirty linens in hotels but you know . . ."

Abbie: "Her life is weird."

Linda: "But from what she said and what she showed here, the contrast was . . ." (pause).

Virginia: "Is this what you mean about society being two-faced?"

Linda: "Yes."

Abbie: "Her main thing was that women, well, she's not for work of equal pay for equal value because that ghettoizes women. If women get paid more to be secretaries and clerks, then they'll stay in those professions. I said, 'Where the heli do you think women are going to be? We're not all going to be prime minister and we're certainly not all going to be chairperson of something or other, some stupid . . .'"

Linda: ". . . and then she came up at the end of our conversation with Janine, she came up with the most famous thing, she sits in this position (demonstrates) and she says, 'Yes, I agree. If you're laying in the gutter, a woman will walk by you but a man will always pick up his friend.' Like that's a lot of crapola and I thought, 'And this is from a woman who is for our rights?' That really blew my mind."

Abbie: "——— is not a woman. She's a Person. Talk about not being able to deal with your own class? Holy, moly!"

Linda: "And through all this, I kept thinking back to a friend of Tommy's who was drinking too much milk because he thought it was good nutrition. He had pretty well dried up. He was off the booze. This was skid road, eh. He'd heard that milk was good nutrition, and he really needed to build himself up because he wanted to work, eh. This is how society prepares you. So he was drinking gallons of milk and he got kidney stones because at a certain age you cannot (Abbie: oh ya, digest calcium) so, that when he came

out of hospital after a long stay, when he passed out in the street, and they found out he was drunk, he was treated very very badly even for ambulance attendants. Oh it was really bad for him. It was a nightmare for him because he was in agony, and after a few weeks when he was finally let out, and he had passed them (the kidney stones) he came up to Tommy and he said, 'You know Tommy, I have the greatest respect for women now that I know what it's like to give birth.' What a man passes is a matter of millimeters. What a woman passes is a matter of pounds. It kind of gave him a new perspective. It's kind of like ———. She needs to pass a few kidney stones."

D. Surviving and Revealing

(I was asking the women about their experience of having the Catalyst Theatre visitors.)

Virginia: "What was the relationship between the play you saw (after Catalyst had come and worked with the group) and what they did here?"

Linda: "Well, I think when we were doing all these things, when we were showing them our body sculpture, about how we dealt with the world, we were showing how the walls of the world kinda close in sometime."

Laura: (quietly) "Whaddya mean, sometimes?"

Virginia: "Did you feel listened to?"

Linda: "Yes!"

. . . . . .

Linda: "It was very intense, even the kids felt it."

. . . . . .

Linda: "It was like that Shirley Maclean story where she says it was like a revelation. Well, this was like a revelation too — it had been sort of hidden — and not in a way that invaded your privacy."

E. Work for Welfare: A Streetside View

Linda: "What's happening now is going to screw the people who need it the most. And I like the way they initiate us. First of all, you get this thing from the government that says if you do your taxes you have to declare income if you're on welfare. Then you read yet another week later that not only are they thinking of work for welfare but they've got big plans on what they're going to do."

Laura: "Oh, there's a big article in today's paper on that."

Linda: "Oh, they've had it in *The Journal* even before they had it in *The Sun*."

Laura: "Oh ya, I had *The Journal* a couple of times last week. It's double-talk, right? They're not gonna make conditions on you receiving welfare BUT they want you to work for a minimum wage, right, but to get you to do it, but on minimum wage you get $135 more than you earn on welfare."

Linda: "But they don't tell you you're gonna pay damn taxes on that too."

Laura: "Wow!"

Linda: "It takes $135 off you."

Laura: "More than that in a month. They're saying that you go for a job, you won't get hired because you've been on welfare, and they want someone who's been in the workforce. This will keep you in the workforce so you've got a current work record when you go to look for a job. They're explaining it very well."

Virginia: "Will you get unemployment insurance when you leave?"

Linda: "Yes, you will. The Alberta Government has figured out how to shift the buck. The employer only has to keep you long enough so you can collect UIC. When you figure out what you actually get as take-home after all the deductions, you're actually getting less because you have to pay Canada Pension, UIC and taxes. When my mom was on a program to make her employable she worked for six months turning boxes and boxes of paper into microfiche. It was underground, and there was so much security hassle getting out, and the coffee was ten cents cheaper down there so they stayed there. They told her they would give her training. All she got paid was her welfare."

Virginia: "That's got to be illegal."

Linda: "Not when the government does it. It's called on-the-job training!"

F. Please listen to me. I'm trying!

(Linda explained that every six months, you have to sign back on to Child Welfare. For anything extra you have to let them open a file. Child Welfare is different than Social Services. This is for the well-being of children, for supplies for school, special medical or other treatment. Laura explained how a counsellor inserted herself into her home, into her "business" and started saying all her children needed to go to counselling. In order to send her child on a school bus, Linda was forced to sign a paper allowing all kinds of conditions to which she had no choice but to agree, even though she really did not want to. Mothers who sign suddenly become viewed, they believe, as "at-risk" families with "at-risk" children in need of "treatment".)

Linda: ". . . and all this because my son has a learning disability that I tried to explain to the doctors when he was two but they would not listen."

Virginia: "This is like a bad dream."

Laura and Linda: "It is a bad dream."

Laura: "They took me to juvenile court because Freida missed two months of school and that made me fighting mad. After court, the school social worker sent my daughter the nastiest letter I have ever seen. It was a threatening letter addressed to her and when she read it she just cried. It basically said she was a delinquent and if she didn't do what they said, she'd be sorry. She had to sign a blank paper."

Linda: "I had also to sign a blank paper."

(The women said they felt the paper was legal because the social worker had typed on N/A. But once a person signs this paper, Child Welfare personnel don't have to have a warrant to come into your house. They can come in without any warning at any time. A social worker has to give notice but a child care worker does not. The following response from Linda was in answer to my question as to the consequences of coming under Child Welfare. I asked, "Has it harmed you in any particular way?")

Linda: "It harmed me on December 26 when I should have been able to lay around and enjoy life. I was going out with Freida to a Boxing Day sale and I get this call from this child care worker saying she's coming. I asked if it was important. She was just coming. No explanation. She didn't even wish me merry Christmas. What the hell was she doing in my house? Boxing Day, when they don't even work officially. She just came and snooped around. She had nothing to say to me, nothing and my kids see that, and I'm uptight, you want to relax the day after Christmas. My turkey's sitting there. I want to freeze it. I had plans, eh. Instead, I cut it all up and threw it in the fridge and started yelling at my kids to put away their toys. I was all uptight, angry and nervous. What is this all about? You don't know. It's held over your head and what for, because my son's a problem?

"And when I went to see them, they think I have all kinds of time to do things. They expect me to find money for babysitting for Susan and I can't. I went through two months when the medication was so strong he kept going in his pants. And they kept telling me it was all my fault, it was in the home, I was doing something wrong. It's me. Eighteen pairs of underwear down the drain. So I said what is going on . . . The bus driver tells me that my son either quits his aggression or he doesn't ride the buses and the school is telling me that I'm the only one who has problems with him, that he's fine at the Glenrose."

(She did not leave room to interrupt as she went on expressing her upset and said that this was how she talked to the guy at the hospital too because she was so pissed off.)

(Repeating her monologue to the man at the hospital) "You may want to extend that myth about my sitting around on my ass and going out and spending money. Well, I have a hard time eating and my kid may be well dressed, but when was the last time you saw me in a different outfit? I always wear my burgundy sweater and my black pants, I says. Since you've met me have you ever seen me in anything different? Has my hairstyle changed? Do I have make-up, fancy perfume? (quietly and laughingly:) I even forgot to wear deodorant. The guy looked at me and the whole meeting long, when I'd been trying to explain to the guy what was wrong, they had this guy sitting in there who found me literally hilarious because the more agitated I got, the more I tried to explain to the guy, hey look, it can't be me, I am working so damn hard, don't tell me I'm not working, I'm WORKIN, I'm WORKIN!

"They're very very strict on the day ward and what happens is that Fred holds all this anger in check all day long and then when he gets on the school bus he explodes. He wants to learn. He wants to be good for the teacher. He's only 7. And the only support I've got has been from the teacher. The teacher has prepared me that they are going to dump Fred so I can find another school. The more waves you make, the more they want to get rid of you. They want the easy-going parents. What really irks me about the

system is that I'm a parent who participated and those are the ones they don't want. The system is designed for those who just walk away and say do something."

". . . I cannot handle my son. I cannot cope with him in the household as is. Tina is missing her two bottom teeth because of Fred. It has been life-threatening at times having him in the house. I have come so far, and to have those buggers refuse to address the one reason I sought help, to help my son to handle his anger so he isn't going around punching and kicking so he can understand whatever is eating at him, he needs help. I haven't denied that. I need help to help him."

(She then explained that Fred is afraid of men and that the school is like a military camp with the major intent of getting the kids to respect authority. He then lets loose in the bus. He attacked a little girl leaving bruises and scratch marks on her neck — her name was Tina too. He abuses his sister badly and then tries to hide or deny it. She has stitches in several places at his hands.)

CHAPTER 9

EVALUATION

I. OUTCOMES

A. Participation

The first meeting was on September 25, 1985, and in that year, there were a total of twelve group meetings in addition to several smaller meetings with individual participants. In 1986, the group met weekly from January to the end of June with one week off for Easter and one other week cancelled when most people indicated they would not be there. From September of 1986 until the present time, the group has continued to meet, cancelling the odd meeting when it was known in advance that participants would be unable to attend.

In addition to the two staff participants, there were a total of fifteen adult participants in the first year of meeting. Of those fifteen, only three are in the group for the second year, but new women have come out to the group this year.

At the first meeting there were only four women, including Bev and me. The original two community participants later brought friends. There was a regular core of eight people who were at most meetings before Christmas in addition to the children, who numbered nine. After Christmas, we lost the Latin American women, due, at least in part, to educational and training programs , and we gained a few others. After Christmas, there was a core of seven women at most meetings.

In addition to being women, all community participants are on low incomes and some are single parents. Most are on some sort of social assistance. Few have much formal education although one of the women was a teacher in Columbia. One of the women has had some experience in popular education in another Canadian city. Several of the original participants spoke very limited English requiring frequent interpreting when the one fully bilingual participant was there and much effort on the part of all to communicate so that each person was included. English and Spanish speakers alike have developed a greater appreciation of language and communication skills and a sensitivity to a different cultural group.

One of the regular attenders is a woman on an assured income program for the severely handicapped. This woman has come to have a very special place in the group, and seems to have found it valuable in her own development. She has been going to school since the fall of 1986, something she has never before had the opportunity to do. For the rest of the group, she has not only been a faithful, caring friend, but her presence has provided us with a critical mirror wherein we are obliged to look at the many taken-for-granteds in our life: literacy, learned social graces and various other abilities to do for ourselves and for others.

B. Employment

Three women in the first year found employment, one due directly to contacts made in the project.

Another woman has been referred to and accepted by a Special Needs counsellor at Canada Employment. They have agreed to place her in employment which recognizes her visual handicap and to supplement the employer's payment of her wages.

C. Training and Other Formal Educational Opportunities

The husband of one participant has, through our referral and assistance, been placed in an employment preparation program.

As mentioned previously, one participant made the decision to go to school and has for the past year been in a part-time literacy program where she has done very well. She would like to go into a full-time literacy program but the waiting lists are long.

Other participants have spoken of their desire to return to school to learn some sort of vocation whereby they might earn a living and get off the welfare cycle. Their social workers have counselled them to wait until their children are in school since it would cost the government more to pay for daycare for the children and send the mother to school, than to keep the family on welfare.

D. Community Organization for Learning and Living

About one third of the group were Latin American immigrants and have difficulty with the English language. They in turn have told us of many more people in the community who cannot, for reasons of lack of money or work schedules, take advantage of existing E.S.L. programs.

A meeting was held one Saturday morning in November of 1985 to which six women came to discuss with us the possibilities of having a community-based E.S.L. class. They agreed to come up with the names of twelve people committed to attending a class four times weekly, and, to be involved in the selection of staff and designing of curriculum for such classes. The College agreed to assist them with getting funding, facilities and a teacher and helping them to apply for babysitting and tuition costs from the Student Finance Board.

This class never took place; the people who saw themselves as needing it did not agree on what they wanted. A few said it was important to them to be able to go to a larger program where they could be placed in a greater variety of levels. However, they know the possibility now exists to have classes in their community if they can get a sufficient number of people together. One reader had many questions as to why this need was not more satisfactorily addressed. I was not involved in the group beyond what I have indicated because I simply lacked the time to do more than I was doing. Time is certainly one of the major issues in doing this kind of work in a community.

One action the group did take was to register as a society so that funds which come from the community college are now filtered through the Project as a society and administered by elected officers thereof. There are several learned skills involved in

this process. There was the act of registration itself with all the steps and then the setting up of a bank account to handle the funds. There is the on-going administration of those funds, which is handled not by paid staff but by the women themselves. This initially seemed to work very well, but a mistake was made in setting up the bank account with only one signatory who moved out taking our monies with her. This year, there are no funds coming into the group. Should there be in future, a collective system of banking would be implemented.

One member of the group who read the initial draft of this text suggested that the initiative for registering as a society was the facilitators' rather than the group's. The fact that she mentioned this suggests to me that she was critical of the group's decision to go along with this suggestion which was indeed made by the facilitators. This points to the issue of the rightness or wrongness on the part of facilitators to take the initiative. We suggested that the group take this action for practical reasons as well as educational ones. The College sponsoring the project suggested that to do so would be more in keeping with the intents of the project which were to encourage people to be increasingly responsible for their own lives.

This spring, the group considered applying for a grant from the national Health and Welfare Department which would have given us up to sixty thousand dollars over a three year period to study and better understand and to design action towards the resolution of community health issues. When I read the criteria for this grant, I thought it was made in heaven for this group. Health was defined in the broadest possible way as well-being, and one of the stipulations was that community members had to be in control of the project. After some thought, however, the women decided not to apply. They felt there were too few of them to handle that responsibility, and they were terribly fearful of two things. One was the loss of welfare should they earn any funds at all, even the legally allowed limit of one hundred and fifteen dollars per month. They felt that the workers would find ways of cutting them off one way or another. The other was the fear of losing their children if they rocked any boats. For Bev and me, it was discouraging to see the opportunity seemingly lost for creative change to come about. We were also saddened to recognize the extent of the fear that is felt by those who are dependent on government employees for their most basic necessities. One good thing which came out of these discussions was the awareness on everyone's part that change could come about but that it would happen in very small steps, the first of which the women of the community were willing to take, with help.

In 1987, one other initiative was taken by the group, and that was the establishment of a clothing exchange. The need for children's clothing especially was recognized, and the group saw that two needs could be met simultaneously with such an exchange. Firstly, a community need would be served. Secondly, those making use of it would become aware of the presence of the group in their community and might feel more comfortable returning. Used clothing is collected in the house and there is a sign advising anyone in the community to come and take what they can use anytime the group is meeting together. A few people have made use of this service although the group would be happy if more did so. The church group who are leasing the facility which the group makes use of once a week are less happy about the arrangement partly due to the space it takes up downstairs.

E. Identification of Learning Needs

1. Parenting: Many participants have expressed low self-esteem with regard to their parenting skills. A program of 3-4 sessions including videotapes and discussions was held in January and early February. In addition, the topic comes up frequently in general conversation and people are always sharing ideas with one another.

2. Sewing: In that some participants have not learned to sew and have limited literacy skills, sessions were planned for learning how to use commercial patterns. Interest has also been expressed in learning to knit, crochet, and to make a group quilt which might be raffled off to contribute to the cost of childcare in the project.

These plans did not materialize primarily because those who had originally supported them mostly left the group after Christmas. The few who wanted them and remained in the group opted for other priorities first. We chose to do photostories rather than the quilt although at least one person would have preferred that option and we did not have time for both.

3. Vocabulary Development: Participants with limited formal education have expressed their need and wish to learn more words with which to express themselves. Aside from the on-going explanation of new words in our discussions, no formal means of addressing these needs has been discussed. In the first year, people accepted increasing responsibility for the meaning of words they did not know and for getting help in finding those words they needed to express themselves. One useful exercise was the drawing of pictures of our lives which we then discussed at length. The whole process of putting together a photostory to share with others also involved language development as did the numerous visits we had from various people in the community.

4. Job Search: This began as a strong need but has been met to a degree by referrals and success in finding jobs or training programs by some participants. It is less often raised as an issue than one might imagine, primarily, I believe, because of the numerous obstacles thrown up for people who are on welfare and would like to get off it. For example, there have been two women in the group who have wanted to work but have received only discouragement from welfare officials. Both women are under-qualified and would have to return to school first to get the qualifications to do meaningful work that would support their single-parent families. They have been counselled by social services to wait until their children are in school and then make application to go to school themselves because it is to expensive to put all their preschoolers in daycare right now.

5. Creative Family Recreation: Participants have wanted to do some things together with their children in order to explore new ways of being together with children to the enjoyment and learning of all. We held a Christmas party in which this happened. At that time, we celebrated one child's birthday and someone else's husband brought a guitar and taught the children some songs which everyone enjoyed. Our year-end celebration is also one we do with the children.

6. Women's Issues: Many of our discussions have found us arriving at the problems women face in society, particularly women on low incomes, women with little in the way of formal education and skill-training, and single parents. Women's issues are an on-going learning concern with this group. Two of our spring activities

focused specifically on that topic. One involved the two sessions with facilitators for Catalyst Theatre who were researching a play on single moms. The other involved inviting a government official concerned with women's issues to come and listen to the group.

F. Responsive Action

1. De-Indexing of Family Allowances: This was raised as a fear and a problem, and we shared what we knew about this issue. One participant was better-informed than the rest of us and offered to prepare a letter of inquiry to the Prime Minister expressing our fears as to its effect on women who may have no other money to call their own. Those individuals who so desired signed the letter and it was sent. We received a very standard, non-committal response, politician-style, but that in itself was a learning for the group.

2. Dangerous Chemicals on Apples: Following discussion of an article in the *Edmonton Journal*, it was decided to write a letter to appropriate government officials and to grocery stores in the neighborhood protesting the use of shellac, fungicide and other chemicals on our foodstuffs. We requested alternative choices and meanwhile learned we should peel our apples! (Two readers advised us that this is of no use, that the chemicals penetrate the skin and invade the fruit as well.) We talked about alternative actions in the community and learned that one of the women already bought most of her produce from a rural supplier where it was cheaper and relatively unpolluted by chemicals.

3. Invitation to Minister of Social Services: There is much controversy in the province at present over the government's decision to make some rather severe cutbacks in the allowances received by certain groups of people on social assistance. In addition, there is the work-for-welfare program about to begin. The group decided, in this their second year, to invite the minister responsible for social services, herself a woman, to come to one of their meetings and talk with them about what their lives are like. After much delay and a request that we send a delegation to her office instead, she has finally consented to come.

II. REFLECTIONS

In that we had limited reference points, experiential or theoretical, for the specifics of this educational project, we as staff have learned to a large extent as we go. We have needed to live out of the curricular principles described in the second chapter, principles we only slowly come to understand. We have had to work at letting go of the control, at believing in the latent ability of each member to contribute from the gifts already present and to develop those other skills necessary to participate fully in the curriculum process. In setting intents which are substantially different from the usual intents of an educational program, we also have different criteria for success and a different sense of the time frame in which we can reasonably hope to see results.

After ten months of regular meetings interspersed with personal contact, we were both pleased with the results named and yet mindful of the new problems they create. In that it has been a relatively small group and several people have moved or are moving

into employment and other educational programs, we see a need to allow for the fluid nature of the membership. In that not one person has come to the group in response to the fliers sent out through the school and put in mailboxes, we suspect that the traditional means of advertising are not effective in informing people as to our presence in this type of community. People came through word of mouth alone. A central problem for facilitating this type of group is in finding contact persons with good credibility in the community. These could be (but are not necessarily) professionals such as the public health nurses, some teachers or principals, or support workers, or they could be business people in the community such as the corner baker who cannot resist long conversations with those who come to shop in his store. They might also be church personnel. Some of the latter would be very supportive of this kind of educational project. Others might be very threatened by it. The educator has to spend time in the community talking to many people and getting a feel for who is who and what is what. It is not enough to talk to one or two people who have worked in the community for a long time. Their perspective may be very broad or it may be very narrow.

Trust or credibility is a problem in a community such as this. Institutions, we have found, are generally viewed with mistrust because they have often been experienced as the enemy in the past. Many people on low incomes have either themselves had bad experiences with schooling or are having such experiences through their children and see no reason to connect themselves with an educational institution now. In addition, the openness of the learning program we offer is very unusual and therefore somewhat difficult to describe to people in advance. Education is normally understood to mean information-giving where the teacher knows and the learner does not. We, on the other hand, negotiate with the individuals in a group both the learning content and process. One generally has to experience this before one understands that it is not only a legitimate but a very satisfying and empowering way of acquiring knowledge. Those who lack such experience in formal educational settings tend to think that if the educator is not "laying it on", nothing is happening of value.

Whereas the house in which we meet is convenient, comfortable and free, we wonder if some community members are associating us with the church group who rents the house and offers Christian education programs therein. That would be one possible explanation for some people's avoidance of a program they might otherwise find value in. The question is one of what meaning individuals attach to a particular facility. Not only has the church group used this house, but it was a community centre of sorts some years ago when the city had paid staff working there to set up youth programs. (It is interesting that the city pulled out feeling like they were not getting anywhere and the mothers' group which the church began likewise failed to attract enough women to continue the program. What meaning do community residents attach to this dwelling? It is difficult to know.)

Defining boundaries is difficult in a project of this type. Whereas we wish to extend the usual boundaries separating education from other aspects of the daily lived reality of a person's life, we recognize that we must still define our own boundaries as a group within the larger limitations of being a provincially funded project within a community college. When within the group itself, the spectrum of personalities extends from an activist at one end to some fundamentalist Christians on the other, we as facilitators have to be very clear as to the boundaries within which we are willing to operate.

Politics, personal values and differences were a problem for at least two persons in the group that we know of. It was not our (the facilitators') politics but those of one of the other members of the group. One woman was a right-wing Christian, another a left-wing Christian Marxist. The first was very uncomfortable with our acceptance of the latter, and suspected that we had the same "unChristian" (in her eyes) intents as did the other woman. In another case, a woman who came only a few times expressed her discomfort with the "street" language being used by one of the other women. She did not want her children to hear language like that. It is difficult to know to what extent that influenced her decision not to come back eventually because she had other explanations which involved legal battles that were taking up her time and energy.

Our attempts at doing evaluation with the group were not as revealing as I might have hoped. People were reluctant to say anything critical, perhaps because they appreciate the facilitators' presence and efforts in the group. The best indicators we have had of critical evaluation came in the planning for the next stages in the group. I wonder too if the reluctance to be critical is partly a women's issue? Women are socialized to take care of others, to mediate sharp edges, to protect from hurt. It may be that we take care of those who are hurting us, to our own detriment, without even realizing we are doing so.

The second year has in some ways seen more clarity and openness on the part of those members of the group who have been involved the longest. They have seemed more willing to say how it is for them. At a recent meeting called to discuss a funding proposal one woman finally asked, "Who's pushin' this?" and suggested that she thought the proposal was not appropriate at that time. That honesty seemed to be what prompted another woman to say there was too much risk attached to making waves and that as she saw it, the predominant purpose of the group was to be an occasion for "sounding off".

Indeed, the group meetings are not unlike pressure cookers having reached the boil. The release of steam prevents the lids from blowing off, but, until those lids come off, who is going to see what the steam is all about? Beyond my frustration with the group's fear of taking action in response to their common problems lies a growing understanding of the risks involved and the time it takes to chip away at this complex, deeply-rooted system which works to maintain poverty, ignorance and bias in our country. I am convinced that well-intended attempts on the part of the powerful to "fix" the lives of those less powerful are doomed to failure because the "fixers" do not want to know what has caused the problems to begin with and to address them at source.

Aside from attracting people to come the first time, the single most perplexing problem we faced as facilitators was knowing when it was appropriate to give people a push to move beyond their stories of pain and anger onward to taking some concrete action to resolve their problems. The women had story after story after story, each one monumental and heart-rending. One woman's story never failed to trigger several others from other members of the group. At times they seemed compulsive in their need to unload all the emotion with someone listening. We honored that need until we felt that either they were bogging down and digging themselves in deeper or until it became apparent that other members of the group needed to get on with the tasks they had agreed upon. It was especially problematic when new members joined us because it took time to enable them to experience the community of the group and for us to get to know them a little.

As an example, I remember the day Lynne (not her real name) told me her son had been suspended from school. She seemed very depressed. I asked how old her son was. She said he was seven and I was surprised, knowing just how much of a problem a child has to be for a principal to suspend her or him. We had agreed as a group to work on a photostory and had only two regular sessions to get all the parts together. As she talked to me for over an hour about this son over whom she felt she had absolutely no control, I felt torn between knowing she needed to talk and also needed some help with this burden but also knowing that I was the only one in the group who had done photostory work before and they needed my help too. I thought of making an arrangement to meet with her later but I knew she would see this as yet another put-off and she was up to her eyebrows in put-offs and putdowns when it came to professionals. I refused to be another one. Yet I went away feeling a little annoyed with myself for not having dealt with the situation more efficiently, although what that meant, I did not know. I rather resented her having put me in that dilemma. I felt very ashamed, therefore, when several days later Bev related to me a conversation she had had with this woman in which, out of the blue, Lynne had told her how much it had meant to her that I was willing to take the time to listen to her. It made me realize how seldom in our society people take the time to be human with other people, people who are hurting. We all have reasons, to be sure, but do we really try to understand the implications of our unwillingness to be present to another?

A couple of readers questioned the meaning of the above situation for the other participants. At the time it happened, I responded as a human being reaching out to the need of another human being, and I had to trust that the rest of the group could and would take care of itself without me. But questions do arise for me in retrospect. Was there insufficient trust for Lynne to say what she wanted in the whole group, and if not, why? Or was she aware that the group had a process of its own going and she did not want to interrupt that? Did the others interpret this situation in a positive or negative light: "she doesn't trust us; Virginia's seen as more able than we are", or, "we're glad Lynne has this opportunity for one-to-one attention and we know that opportunity will be there for us when we need it, with Virginia, or with someone else." In other words, I wonder if the whole group participated in a sense, in giving time to Lynne, or if they did not experience the choice. Whereas I do not think we can know the answer to this question, asking it helps me to remember, yet again, that the way I interpret the world is not the way others do and even though I have known that, I do not always respond with that knowledge in mind.

Another problem which we have seen as facilitators concerns the unpredictable state of these women's lives. One woman was scheduled to lead a workshop in chocolate-making. She did not show up. It is a common occurrence to have children get sick or authorities make demands which make it impossible to honor commitments to the group. That was fine when two paid facilitators were there to pick up the pieces. I doubt if the women experience it as a big problem when we are not there since they are accustomed to dealing with plans that do not work out as intended and seem happy just to have the opportunity to visit one with the other. However, if telling our stories is to be more than a release valve and is to generate some reflective action to better people's lived reality, I think it is important for two trained facilitators to work with such a group at all times. By trained facilitator, I do not necessarily mean someone with a master's degree from a university. What I mean is someone who has both the understandings and skills necessary to help a group of people to move from story to action. Eventually, we expect that members of the community itself will develop into facilitators, for that is the intent of our work as facilitators.

Over a long term, we need to be educating the community as to the issues (working with them to name their own issues, not telling them what they are) and enabling them to acquire the skills to facilitate creative responses to those issues. One problem, however, is that the women in the group have little time and less energy to do more than survive. In our endeavors to assist them to take more power over their own lives, we have first to recognize the existence of their most basic needs: the need to love and be loved and cared for, the need for safe, healthy accommodation and nourishment, and the need for protection from those who would brutalize them and their children.

As educators, we are not in a position to guarantee such provisions, nor, can we stand back and tell those in need to demand them. I am beginning to experience this work as a long walk, three steps forward, two (and sometimes four) back. Sometimes, it means going with someone to an appointment she cannot face alone. Other times, it means refusing to do just that, knowing that although she might be angry with me, she will do it herself and be stronger for it. It means sometimes pushing, sometimes holding, sometimes listening, sometimes speaking. A professional in these circumstances is a little like an artist weaving a tapestry in which the strands change form and color day by day. So the weaver begins each day, not totally anew, but never assuming anything is the same either. As she stands back and views her handiwork, she discovers that the real work of art has been her life, a daily reshaping in response to her world, and that as her life changes shape, so does the work of her hands, the world around her.

CHAPTER 10

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This writing is intended to be what it says: a window on participatory education through which I have invited you, the reader, to peer into my experiences and ideas in the hopes they may trigger your own reflections and inspire your own ideas. It has not been by any means a thorough theoretical or practical exploration of the subject. Therefore, this chapter is intended to offer other directions where you may find more about this or that. I have included a variety of materials, a few of which could be distributed to specific community groups who wish to facilitate their own learning and working together. Others are very theoretical texts that *almost* require a graduate education in curriculum theory to read. It is my intent that there be something here for everyone, and in order that you may have an idea of what to expect in each, I have made brief notes.

Some of you may find that this writing has been too general and did not address the specifics of your particular context. Some of the works cited below are addressed to particular contexts including E.S.L., literacy, women's education and consumer education. A couple address briefly the question of deviance and another would be well read by health-care workers in particular. Having worked in all of these particular contexts, I find that they have more in common than they do unique, in that each context embraces persons who are excluded from full participation in society. I would, therefore, encourage all educators to look beyond the confines of their special area and see what related areas have to offer.

APPLE, Michael, ed.
Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education
Routledge and Kegan Paul
London, 1982

- a series of essays by various authors including Apple, Martin Carnoy and Basil Bernstein. Addresses gender issues, economic and social issues and the arts within a critical sociology of school knowledge.
- not recommended for beginners in this area, it is a good text for those with some background and vocabulary in critical theory.

168 pp.

APPLE, Michael W
Education and Power
Ark Paperbacks
Boston, 1985 (originally published in 1982)

- Apple is essential reading, at some point, to anyone interested in critical education. This particular book is relatively jargon-free and easy to read. Includes notes on the hidden curriculum and deviance as it is produced by the system.

216 pp.

APPLE, Michael W
Ideology and Curriculum
Routledge and Kegan Paul
London, 1979
- a theoretical text examining the ways in which educational systems work to maintain the status quo.
- discusses the notion of "cultural capital" (e.g. "good taste," certain kinds of prior knowledge, abilities and language forms) which helps the educator to understand the ways in which minority groups are systematically excluded from the benefits of formal education.

203 pp.

ARNOLD, Rick and BURKE, Bev
A Popular Education Handbook
CUSO and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
Toronto, 1983
- explains popular education, gives examples of programs and gives details for six of the best known tools for building a popular education program.
- includes good bibliography of other resources.

59 pp.

ARNOLD, Rick; BARNDT, Deborah; and BURKE, Bev
A New Weave: Popular Education in Canada and Central America
CUSO and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
Toronto, (no date given)
- available from: Popular Education Exchange,
  c/o Participatory Research Group
  229 College St., 3rd Floor,
  Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R4
- an excellent introduction to popular education; readable and practical.
- "a useful tool in making the links between analysis and action, between personal experiences and social structures, between issues and between movements."
- introduces techniques to be used in a context of critical thought about the methodology and ideology underlying our work as educators.

101 pp.

ARONOWITZ, Stanley and GIROUX, Henry
Education Under Siege: The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate Over Schooling
Bergen and Garvey
South Hadley, Mass., 1985
- an excellent examination of this debate by two highly respected curriculum theorists. Includes notions of reproduction and resistance in education, critical pedagogy, and the place of computer technology in these issues.
- a good reference for educators who want to increase their own awareness.

233pp.

BARNDT, Deborah; CRISTALL, Ferne; and marino, dian
Getting There: Producing Photostories with Immigrant Women
Between the Lines
Toronto, 1982

- a text with many uses: methodology for popular education, techniques for producing photostories, insights into the problems of immigrant women and work, insights into the effects of advertising on immigrant and minority women.
- comes with a poster.

110 pp.

BARNDT, Deborah and CZERNY, Michael eds.
The Moment
Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice

- this thrice yearly periodical is a goldmine in a nutshell. Each issue covers both sides of one small poster-size foldout sheet and contains tools for popular education, samples of how they are applied in context, and a photostory presenting some justice issue from the perspective of an oppressed group who are struggling with moving beyond their situation.
- subscriptions available for $6/year ($3 for the unemployed, students or seniors). Bulk orders discounted. Available from:
  Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice
  947 Queen St. E.
  Toronto, Ontario M4M 1J9

BLOMSTROM, Magnus and BJORN, Hettne
Development Theory in Transition
Zed Books Ltd.
London, 1985 (1984)

- although this book is designed as a summary of international third world development theory, the issues it raises are quite relevant to development within North America. A good "backgrounder" for the reader unaware of dependency theory.

BOPP, Michael
Developing Healthy Communities: Fundamental Strategies for Health Promotion
The Four Worlds Development Project, Faculty of Education,
University of Lethbridge, 1985

- written for educators and development workers with native communities, this text portrays the wholeness of development work and the need to involve community participants in every aspect of the development process.
- gives the steps in a community development process.

111 pp.

BOTKIN, James; ELMANDJRA, Mahdi; and MALITZA, Mircea
No Limits to Learning: Bridging the Human Gap
A Report to the Club of Rome
Pergamon Press
Toronto, 1979

- an excellent international overview of the need for and obstacles to innovative learning processes in education.
- projects our efforts as educators into the perspective of planetary survival.
- includes sections on literacy, research, public schools, higher education and mass media.

159 pp.

CAMPBELL, Duncan
Adult Education as a Field of Study and Practice
Center for Continuing Education, U.B.C. and The International Council for Adult Education
Vancouver, 1979

- a basic textbook for adult educators interested in product and process; takes a comparative perspective from North America and Europe using a case study from Alberta.

230 pp.

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND
INSTITUT CANADIEN d'EDUCATION DES ADULTES
From the Adult's Point of View
Toronto, 1982

- sets the context for adult education in Canada: lifelong learning, trends and issues, financing, minority groups.
- a bilingual text

35 pp. in each language

CAPRA, Fritjof
The Turning Point: Sciences, Society and the Rising Culture
Bantam
Toronto, 1982

- a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of our society's crises and current state of transformation.
- included here as a possible context of the future vision educators and learners can work together to create.

463 pp.

COOVER, Virginia; DEACON, Ellen; ESSER, Charles; and MOORE, Christopher
Resource Manual for a Living Revolution: A Handbook of Skills and Tools for Social Change Activists
New Society Publishers
Philadelphia, 1977

- a valuable resource book of tools for people working for nonviolent social change. Filled with skills and techniques for everything from organizing, planning and leadership training to strategizing, analyzing, resolving conflict and raising consciousness.
- available in Edmonton from the Learner Centre.

330 pp.

CZERNY, Michael and SWIFT, Jamie
Getting Started on Social Analysis in Canada
Between the Lines
Toronto, 1984

- a text work-book which opens up techniques for and areas of social analysis in Canadian contexts. Includes planetary, economic, social and educational issues.
- intended to assist educators and other learners to move into social analysis and on to social justice.

169 pp.

EDMONTON LEARNER CENTRE
Resource Catalogue and Community Directory
Edmonton, 1983-4

- an excellent resource for adult educators in Edmonton. Comes with annual supplements updating resources and community services. Includes films as well as printed materials.
- for readers in other communities, try your local cross-cultural learner centre, Arusha Centre, etc.
- The Edmonton Learner Centre is at 10765 - 98 St., 424-4371.

FERGUSON, Marilyn
The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's
J.P. Tarcher
Los Angeles, 1980

- an exciting popular look at indicators of transformation at all levels of society and the people who are on the leading edges of such change.
- the reader is directed especially to Chapter 9, "Flying and Seeing: Ways to Learn," and to Ferguson's lucid comparisons between the old and new paradigms of education.
- an excellent introduction to the contrast between traditional and participatory styles of eduction.

448 pp.

FOUR WORLDS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Creating Our Future: Foundation Thinking for Development Planning for the Dene Tha Band 1986/87

- a comprehensive, clearly written example of how one native community approaches development as a wholistic process in the context of its own native culture.
- clear, helpful graphics.
- Available from:
  Four Worlds Development Project
  Faculty of Education
  University of Lethbridge
  4401 University Drive
  Lethbridge, Alberta T1K 3M4 (403) 329-2184

FREIRE, Paulo

Education for Critical Consciousness

Continuum

New York, 1981

- a text primarily about "education as the practice of freedom." A theoretical look at education vs. massification and "critical consciousness as the motor of cultural emancipation" (from preface).
- for educators interested in the theory of education for change.

164 pp.

FREIRE, Paulo

Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau

Seabury Press

New York, 1978

- relates the story of Freire's work in organizing a grass-roots literacy campaign in Guinea-Bissau following the Portuguese withdrawal in 1974. Emphasizes the importance of not transplanting any methodology from one context to another but of creating programs in and for a particular context.
- Freire stresses a unity between theory and practice, mental and manual work, and past and present experience.
- "Dialogue authenticates both the act of knowing and the role of the KNOWING Subject in the midst of the act." (p. 39)

178 pp.

FREIRE, Paulo

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Continuum

New York, 1970 (originally published in 1968)

- Freire's best-known text.
- introduces the "banking" concept of schooling and the problem-posing concept of education as an instrument for liberation.
- some methodology for working in this way (codes, generative themes, etc.)

186 pp.

FREIRE, Paulo
The Politics of Education
Bergin and Garvey
Massachusetts, 1985.
- the most recent of Freire's texts, it is a good synthesis of earlier works.
- recommended as a good beginning for those unfamiliar with Freire's writing.

209 pp.

GATT-Fly
Ah-Hah! A New Approach to Popular Education
Between the Lines
Toronto, 1983
- presents a process and techniques for assisting a group of seminar participants "to piece together their individual experiences in a way that clarifies their understanding of political and economic systems." (p. 7)
- works with collective production of a drawing that illustrates the groups economic and political reality.
- Freirian principles: education for action.
- easy to follow.

108 pp.

GIROUX, Henry
Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition
Bergen and Garvey
Massachusetts, 1983
- a good theoretical text for educators interested in pursuing education, social theory and critical practice.
- not bedtime reading, this will increase one's awareness and vocabulary!

280 pp.

GROOME, Thomas
Christian Religious Education
Harper and Row
New York, 1980.
- perhaps one of the most exciting and useful books available for the educator who wants to understand the ethical dimension of education. He gives an excellent discussion of praxis as it has been developed from Aristotle to Freire and shows us how to move from naming our present to creating our vision of a shared future.

278 pp.

HEIDER, John
The Tao of Leadership
Humanics New Age
Atlanta, Georgia 1985
- a book which can help the leader to gain distance from which to see and understand more clearly what is happening in a group. It is a series of short deep but simple passages of wisdom which I find to be valuable tools for reflection.

161 pp.

HILL, Karen
Helping You Helps Me: A Guide Book for Self-Help Groups
Canadian Council on Social Development
Ottawa, 1983
- available free from:

Canadian Council on Social Development
P.O. Box 3505
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4G1 (613) 728-1865
- easy-to-use for community groups and individuals.
- a very practical tool for starting and maintaining self-help groups around particular problems such as illness, an addiction, employment, life changes, etc.
- an excellent explanation of group process and how to smooth the way to effectiveness therein.

HUNTER, Alfred A.
Class Tells: On Social Equality in Canada
Butterworths
Toronto, 1981
- a summary of sociological theory on inequality, included here for its use of Canadian statistics and context.

236 pp.

KOKOPELI, Bruce and LAKEY, George
Leadership for Change: Toward a Feminist Model
New Society Publishers
Philadelphia (no date given)
- a 32 page booklet outlining the problems of patriarchal, authoritarian styles of leadership and exploring an alternative style in which leadership functions are broken down to be learned and shared.
- lists 10 task functions and 10 moral functions of good leadership.
- unpolished, this booklet nonetheless stimulates some interesting thoughts.

32 pp.

MARCHAK, Patricia
In Whose Interests: An Essay on Multinational Corporations in a Canadian Context
McLelland and Stewart
Toronto, 1979

- a balanced and very Canadian view of the large role played by corporations in daily Canadian life. Raises some good questions.
- for the reader who wishes to understand the economic context of our lives.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND CULTURE
Discussion Leader's Handbook
Queens' Printer for Ontario
Toronto, 1982

- a general, easy-to-follow guide to leading discussions aimed at problem-solving.
- recommended for those who lack expertise in this area.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND CULTURE
Getting People Together
Queen's Printer of Ontario
Toronto, 1982

- although some parts are specifically referenced to the Ontario context, this book gives a good introduction to groups as to the kinds of things they would be thinking about and needing to decide, on first becoming a group. Vocabulary not geared to those without about Grade 12 literacy skills.

PAGE, Leslie
Community Exchange Systems: What They Are, How They Work, How to Set One Up
B.C. Ministry of Education
Vancouver, 1985

- answers all the questions one can think of about this way of exchanging goods and services without the medium of currency.
- readers are cautioned to note recent federal government interest in finding a way of challenging this practice insofar as people have not being paying taxes on the value of services earned. (See also p.25 of text for current law interpretation bulletin re: taxes.)
- of special interest to consumer educators.

25 pp.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH GROUP
Research, Education, Action: An Annotated Bibliography on Participatory Research and Popular Education
Toronto, 1985

- an excellent, very comprehensive bibliography including methodology, research critique, theory, training, special interest groups, case studies, political economy, literacy, media, and community organizing.
- available from: Participatory Research Group
  229 College St., Ste. 309
  Toronto, Ontario, M5T 1R4

36 pp.

REIMAN, Jeffrey H.
The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison
John Wiley and Sons
New York, 1984 (1979)
- an interesting insightful perspective upon the inequities of the criminal justice system in the U.S.A.
- compares relative dangers to the public of criminal vs. non-criminal harms such as occupational and environmental hazards and demonstrates the class interest at work in defining what is and is not crime.
- a must for middle-class educators who would like to broaden their perspective.

192 pp.

REUTHER, Rosemary Radford
To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism
Crossroad
New York, 1983 (originally published in 1981)
- a readable theological approach to social criticism. Focuses on Jesus as revolutionary, liberation theology, gender issues, ecology and human liberation.

85 pp.

ROBERTS, Hayden
Community Development: Learning and Action
University of Toronto Press
Toronto, 1979
- a good theoretical introduction to adult education as community development.

188 pp.

SARASAN, Seymour
Psychology Misdirected
Free Press, Collier MacMillan
New York, 1981
- contains a brilliant critique of mainstream psychology (and the social sciences generally) and its implications for education and the social order.

192 pp.

SELMAN, Jan
Theatre for Eduction and Change
Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission
Edmonton, (date not given)
- a clearly written guide for educators and other community leaders who want to use theatre as part of an educational process. Gives step by step directions for the process.

47 pp.

SHOR, Ira
Critical Teaching and Everyday Life
Black Rose Books
Montreal, 1980
- an important and well-known text for anyone doing emancipatory forms of education.
- committed to learning through dialogue and participation. Establishes critical literacy as basic to learning.
- includes a good analysis of schooling along with an alternative teaching theory.

270 pp.

THOMPSON, Jane
Learning Liberation: Women's Response to Men's Education
Crom Helm
Beckenham, Kent, 1983
- a convincing feminist critique of adult education, theory and practice, with women's studies offered as an alternative to current patriarchal models of adult education.

207 pp.

TORONTO BOARD OF EDUCATION ADULT ESL CLASSES
Our Lives
Learners Press
Toronto, 1984
- an interesting, impressive example of a book produced by a group of ESL learners for themselves and for others.
- of direct use to ESL students and teachers but also as a sample for educators generally, of the value of learner-made materials.

48 pp.

WALLERSTEIN, Nina
Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-Posing in the ESL Classroom
Addison-Wesley
Reading, Mass., 1983
- although specifically designed to show ESL teachers how to use Freire's problem-posing methologies in their teaching context, this book is also of use to other educators who might want to adapt the techniques to their particular contexts.
- has an excellent bibliography.

209 pp.

WASMAN, Chaim I.
The Stigma of Poverty
Pergamon Press
New York, 1986 (1983)

- a well-written sociological critique of poverty theories and policies with an interest in reforming American policy to alleviate the suffering of the poor.
- finds the usual cultural and structural analysis of poverty to be wanting and offers an alternative which he calls "the relational perspective," a perspective which is focused upon the interactions between the poor and the non-poor.
- although not for beginners, this text is, in my opinion, competently written and helps the reader to explore various ways of understanding how poverty is created and maintained in our society.

154 pp.

WERNER, Walter and AOKI, Ted
Programs for People
Dept. of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, and Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction, University of British Columbia
Edmonton/Vancouver, 1979

- presents a program development model for educational curriculum, that model forming the basis of the curriculum model used in this text (IDAE model).

65.pp.

WOMEN'S SELF-HELP NETWORK
Working Collectively
North Island Women's Services Society
Ptarmigan Press
Campbell River, B.C., 1984

- provides a rationale for working together collectively, difficulties typically encountered, and tools for doing.
- for facilitators or fairly well-educated community groups. Vocabulary not geared to those lacking good literacy skills.

49 pp.

ZIEGLER, Warren
Designing and Facilitating Projects and Workshops in Futures-Invention: A Guidebook
The Futures-Invention Associates
Denver, Colorado, 1987

- a book of ideas and processes for facilitators interested in having a group create their collective life experiences of the future.
- I especially liked his criteria of discernment for evaluating our images of the future.
- available from:

  The Futures-Invention Associates
  2260 Fairfax St.
  Denver, Colorado. 80207 (303) 399-1077

84 pp.